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THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

MOFFATT'S NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

THE aim of this commentary is to bring out the religious meaning and message of the New Testament writings. To do this, it is needful to explain what they originally meant for the communities to which they were addressed in the first century, and this involves literary and historical criticism; otherwise, our reading becomes unintelligent. But the New Testament was the literature of the early church, written out of faith and for faith, and no study of it is intelligent unless this aim is kept in mind. It is literature written for a religious purpose. 'These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.' This is the real object of the New Testament, that Christians might believe it better, in the light of contemporary life with its intellectual and moral problems. So with any commentary upon it. Everything ought to be subordinated to the aim of elucidating the religious content, of showing how the faith was held in such and such a way by the first Christians, and of making clear what that faith was and is.

The idea of the commentary arose from a repeated demand to have my New Testament translation explained; which accounts for the fact that this translation has been adopted as a convenient basis for the commentary. But the contributors have been left free to take their own way. If they interpret the text differently, they have been at liberty to say so. Only, as a translation is in itself a partial commentary, it has often saved space to print the commentary and start from it.

As everyman has not Greek, the commentary has been written, as far as possible, for the Greekless. But it is based

upon a first-hand study of the Greek original, and readers may rest assured that it represents a close reproduction of the original writers' meaning, or at anyrate of what we consider that to have been. Our common aim has been to enable everyman to-day to sit where these first Christians sat, to feel the impetus and inspiration of the Christian faith as it dawned upon the minds of the communities in the first century, and thereby to realize more vividly how new and lasting is the message which prompted these New Testament writings to take shape as they did. Sometimes people inside as well as outside the church make mistakes about the New Testament. They think it means this or that, whereas its words frequently mean something very different from what traditional associations suggest. The saving thing is to let the New Testament speak for itself. This is our desire and plan in the present commentary, to place each writing or group of writings in its original setting and allow their words to come home thus to the imagination and conscience of everyman to-day.

The general form of the commentary is to provide a running comment on the text, instead of one broken up into separate verses. But within these limits, each contributor has been left free. Thus, to comment on a gospel requires a method which is not precisely the same as that necessitated by commenting on an epistle. Still, the variety of treatment ought not to interfere with the uniformity of aim and form. Our principle has been that nothing mattered, so long as the reader could understand what he was reading in the text of the New Testament.

JAMES MOFFATT.

PREFACE

It has been no easy task to attempt the interpretation of a document so familiar and so valued as the Gospel according to Matthew, especially when the work has to be limited in space. There is hardly a verse which does not leave room for comment, and every reader of the Bible is aware of the meaning usually attributed to the text. Yet so deep and so rich is its content that there is always the possibility of fresh discovery, and I am sending out this little book in the hope that some of its sentences may at least challenge to new efforts those most competent to think and speak on this great subject.

It is, of course, obvious that such a series as this must be limited in extent. I have therefore rigorously excluded much that might have been said, and I can only plead for the indulgence of readers who feel—as many must—that my selection and stress shew an undue lack of balance. I have tried to avoid elaborating familiar lines of exposition and extended treatment of passages which seem to me self-explanatory. Further, I have most lightly skimmed over areas which are common to the First and Second Gospels, believing that they should find their explanation in a work dealing with the Gospel according to Mark. For discussion of these the reader is referred to the Commentary on Mark in this series. If any be curious to know what I myself think about that gospel, he will find my impressions sketched in a little volume published by the Student Christian Movement under the title *The Life of Jesus according to St. Mark.*

This little book is not a learned work, and reference to the work of the recognized New Testament scholars of our own and earlier times has been avoided. But it must be obvious that the writer has sat at the feet of Dr. T. R. Glover, to whom, more than to any other, our generation owes a living

picture of the historic Jesus. Of the standard commentaries the most useful have proved to be those of Johannes Weiss and Canon G. H. Box, while the relevant work of Professor J. A. Findlay, of Dalman, and of Strack and Billerbeck has been invaluable. Writer and readers also owe a heavy debt of gratitude to Professor G. S. Duncan, of St. Andrews, who was good enough to read the MS. and make many important corrections and suggestions. Further, my best thanks for the patient care and skill shewn in the reading of the proofs are due to my wife, and to the Revs. M. Spencer and W. G. Legassick, all of whom have corrected many errors and made useful suggestions.

Finally, I must express the hope that, with all its imperfections, this volume will not fail utterly of its purpose—to help men and women to see Jesus, and to learn of Him.

THEODORE H. ROBINSON.

CARDIFF, *May* 1927.

INTRODUCTION

LIKE Buddha and Socrates, Jesus left no written memorials of his life and work. He dealt directly with men and women, and left them to perpetuate and to spread his message. Later generations have been compelled to rely on memories of his immediate followers, sometimes handed down from mouth to mouth, for their knowledge of his history and of his teaching. After his death there came into being a community, the church, which could at first depend for what information it needed on the narratives and reports of those who had been closest to Jesus in life. But as the gospel spread, it became necessary to write down some account of the events of the ministry of Jesus and of the teaching which he had given to those who had followed him. This was especially needed by those who, following evangelists like Paul, had neither known Jesus himself nor had to deal with the Palestinian community in which direct memories might still be found.

It was inevitable that these accounts of Jesus should be to some extent coloured by the community through whom they passed or for whom they were prepared. No doubt the collections of material varied a good deal in scope and in type, some laying the stress on the teaching of Jesus, others on the events of his life, others, again, on the story of his death and resurrection. It is possible that a narrative of this last kind was the first to be written down, but we have no certainty as to the literary processes of the church till we find a book known to us to-day as the gospel according to Mark. This was an account of the ministry of Jesus from the pen of a simple man of the people, whose claim to literary eminence rests on his vivid style, his fine appreciation of historical values, and his clear sense of proportion. Working, no doubt, on material already to hand in written form, at least in part,

he sketched the various periods in the active public life of Jesus, shewing the characteristic features of each, and tracing the development of each new situation from that which preceded it. His narrative thus has a dramatic quality which belongs only to history of the highest order, and we follow his account with close attention till he leads us to the Cross which Jesus so deliberately chose for himself as his earthly goal.

Such a document naturally formed a suitable basis for other compilers who wished to present the life of Jesus from definite points of view, and to include much material which had the best authority, though it was not found in Mark. There were many such attempts to rewrite the story of Jesus ; only two have come down to us entire. Each of these had a special audience in view, and was written from the angle of a particular part of the church. The author of the Third Gospel was, apparently, a Gentile, who wrote for the church which grew so rapidly in the Graeco-Roman world, adapting both style and manner of presentation to the class of Christians from whom he himself had sprung, and to whom he would hand on what his researches had taught him about Jesus.

In the Christian world the Gentile church rapidly overshadowed the little Jewish community which had its centre at Jerusalem. In the first, or apostolic, generation, the Jerusalem church still held its position of authority and respect, but after the fall of the city in A.D. 70 it ceased to make many Jewish converts, and even the great eastern Church whose metropolis was at Antioch is not clearly distinguished from the western churches by a Jewish atmosphere, or by features which can be traced to a Jewish origin. In fact the primitive Jewish church was, in a few generations, merged in the larger body, and even in Palestine presented few peculiar features. But before its absorption into the general whole, it produced one outstanding monument of itself and of its point of view, and it gave to the Christian world of all time its priceless contribution in the document which we know as the gospel according to Matthew. Here we see, as we could see nowhere else, how believers of the same race

as Jesus, brought up in the same religious tradition, with the same spiritual ancestry, looked upon the Christ.

The writer of this gospel, then, had been born a Jew, and it is probable that he represented not unfairly that type of Judaism with which Jesus himself was most familiar in his earlier years. He is a Christian rabbi, and selects and interprets from that point of view. He has two main interests, which distinguish him from the other evangelists—the messianic function of Jesus and his eschatology. It is clear from our other authorities that Jesus himself was not indifferent to these two subjects, but in this gospel they are stressed far more than they are elsewhere. A good Jew necessarily believed in the supremacy of his race, and in the final triumph of his faith over all the world. But to his mind salvation must come first to the Jew, and be by him transmitted to the Gentiles. Presumably these might be expected to become Jews, but, in any case, it was only through Judaism and the Jewish Messiah that they could enter the Realm of heaven, and attain the spiritual goal of mankind. It was necessary, therefore, to prove first to the Jew that Jesus was the Messiah, and it was as a piece of evidence to this truth that the whole gospel was compiled.

Now, the average Jew of the first centuries B.C. and A.D. looked for a Messiah who should be the fulfilment of prophecy. Many of the events which the prophets of Israel had foretold had not yet come to pass, and a mechanical view of the prophetic function led men to believe that these predictions must find their translation into literal fact in the person and deeds of the Christ. Hence there are two principles likely to be observed in the application of prophecy by Matthew: (*a*) every prediction recognized as messianic must find a corresponding event in the life of Jesus, (*b*) every event recorded of Jesus must have been foretold in the Old Testament, preferably in one or other of the Prophets. The gospel according to Matthew is not unique in this respect, for the others also recognize the correspondence between the expected Messiah of the Old Testament and the actual Jesus, but

nowhere else is the principle carried to such lengths as here. There are even passages where we suspect that the text of his source has been deliberately modified by the evangelist in order to fit more closely the *ipsissima verba* of the relevant prophecy. It is also possible that his choice of material was affected by the same consideration. Probably he could not include all that to which he had access, even by abbreviating narratives, and he preferred to select events for which there was a prophecy ready to his hand.

The eschatological interests of the evangelist have influenced his work in much the same way. Comparison with the other gospels shews beyond doubt that Jesus did use the eschatological language common to his own time, and that he at least clothed his teaching in the apocalyptic garb which marked Jewish thought during the last two centuries B.C. So obvious is this that some interpreters have supposed that the whole outlook of Jesus was eschatological, and that he expected his death immediately to introduce the new time for which men were looking. This is no place to discuss such a theory; the reader must rely on his own judgement and on his discriminating study of the gospel narratives themselves. But there can hardly be any doubt as to the position of this evangelist. He loses no opportunity of imparting an apocalyptic flavour to the sayings of Jesus; the phrase, for instance, 'There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' is repeatedly introduced where comparison with other documents shews that it was not original, and, again, the choice of passages included is clearly influenced by the writer's special interests.

There is also a marked tendency to introduce the church into the gospel story. The Jewish nation, from the point of view of the Pharisee and of the rabbi, was essentially a community which existed for the sake of God and His worship. The messianic age could not but reproduce this in some way. The new body of men was not to be limited by national or racial identity; it was to be world-wide, and to include all who might seek to enter the Kingdom. But the evangelist could not think of a religion or of an ideal state which was not bound up with some community, and we may well believe that,

although Jesus may not actually have used the word 'church,' yet this element in the gospel is an accurate presentation of his ideals. The Reign of God—or of Heaven, as Matthew's rabbinic mind expressed the idea—necessarily involved a social group, and the conception of a ransomed humanity involved in itself the thought of a redeemed society.

The identity of the evangelist has been much discussed. Tradition attributes the gospel to one of the Twelve, a tax-collector called in the other gospels Levi, and in this book Matthew. The tradition seems to go back to a statement made by the second-century writer Papias, and to have been due to a misunderstanding of the passage in question. The reference will meet us later, and further discussion of it can be postponed. On other grounds the gospel does not impress us as being the work of an eye-witness of the events it describes. This is the kind of feeling for which it is often impossible to assign logical grounds, but the reader who compares this with the Fourth Gospel will almost certainly be sensible of a directness of experience there which is entirely wanting here. The Fourth evangelist writes as if he has seen what he describes—at least in the narrative portions; the First evangelist gives us the impression of relying on the observation of others, and, indeed, on earlier documentary sources.

The mention of other sources leads us to ask a question as to the material on which the evangelist had to rely. It is obvious at a glance that his mainstay was the gospel of Mark, practically in the form in which we have it to-day. The history of the ministry of Jesus follows Mark closely, with few variations in the order of events, and those few explicable on obvious grounds. Thus while Matthew includes a number of events which are not recorded in Mark, the omissions from the Marcan history are only three in number: Matthew leaves out the exorcism of Mark i. 23–28, does not mention the fact that Jesus once taught from a boat (Mark iii. 9), and he omits the cure of a certain blind man (Mark viii. 22–26). And when the individual passages are compared, the similarity in language is too close to be accidental. There are differences,

but they are comparatively slight when compared with resemblances, and the evidence of dependence is overwhelming.

The evangelist, however, had other material as well. In particular there is a good deal that is not found in Mark, but is common to Matthew and Luke. To this the name 'logia' is sometimes given, but the use of the term in this connexion is probably due to a misunderstanding of the passage in Papias to which allusion has already been made, and it is more usual to employ the symbol 'Q' (German *Quelle* = source) in speaking of this portion of the two gospels. It consists mainly of sayings of Jesus, and includes only one event, the healing of the centurion's servant. It is commonly held to be a single document, an early collection of the teaching of Jesus, but this view, in the opinion of the present writer, seems to be doubtful. Some of the parallels are almost word for word identical in the two gospels, but in others there are differences which seem to rest on different renderings into Greek of the same Aramaic original, while others appear to be due to variations in the underlying Aramaic itself. It is manifestly impossible that these three classes of passage should be derived from the same single document, and it seems more probable that out of a large mass of separate scraps and booklets both evangelists had a number in common, though some of these may have been small collections of sayings.[1] It is, nevertheless, convenient to retain the symbol 'Q' to indicate material which was used by both Matthew and Luke.

In addition to this looser matter, in which Q (so understood) is included, it seems clear that this evangelist drew largely on a collection of Old Testament passages which were selected as being useful for apologetic purposes when arguing with Jews. Allusion has already been made to a statement attributed to Papias by Eusebius. This runs: 'Matthew, then,

[1] We find five times (vii. 28, xi. 1, xiii. 53, xix. 1, xxvi. 1) a phrase like **When Jesus finished his speech** at the end of sections of teaching. This may indicate that the material in this evangelist's hands was arranged in groups. Professor Findlay thinks that these phrases point to divisions within a 'Book of Testimonies' (*Expositor*, Series 8, vol. xx., pp. 388 f.).

compiled the oracles ("logia") in the Hebrew tongue. And each interpreted them as he was able' (ap. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, iii. 39). It was somewhat hastily supposed that this referred to a collection of sayings, and the name 'logia' was therefore applied to 'Q.' The error has been sufficiently discussed by Armitage Robinson,[1] who points out that 'logia' always refers to the scriptures, and that the word does not mean 'sayings,' which would be 'logoi.' It has also been suggested that the term implied our present gospel of Matthew, which would then be a Greek translation of a Hebrew (or Aramaic) original, but this seems to be quite impossible. Whilst there is, of course, a great deal of Aramaic underlying our gospel, especially in the speeches and conversations, it is perfectly clear—if only from the use made of Mark—that it is not a translation from a complete Semitic original. It must have reached its present form in the Greek language.

We are left, then, with the most natural suggestion, namely, that 'logia' means the Old Testament. The work ascribed by Papias to Matthew will not have been a transcript of the whole Old Testament; that goes without saying. But it may well have been a collection of 'oracles' dealing with the Messiah, such as might be used by the Christian to prove to the Jew that Jesus was the Christ. We know that such collections were current in the third century, and that they passed in the western church under the name of 'Testimonies,' but in the Jewish church the need for them would be immediate and urgent. The best explanation of Papias's language seems to be that Matthew prepared such a collection of 'Testimonies,' using the Hebrew text, and let each person translate for himself as he had need.[2]

A study of the Old Testament quotations in the gospel throws light on this remark of Papias. There are over twenty citations in those portions of Matthew which are derived from Mark, and with one possible exception (Matthew xxvi. 31) all seem to follow the text of the LXX. An interesting case is Matthew xiii. 14, 15, where Mark has a loose reference,

[1] *The Study of the Gospels*, pp. 68 f.

[2] But see Bacon in *Expositor*, series 8, vol. xx., pp. 289 f.

while Matthew has a complete quotation from the Greek text. Only two of these events recorded by Mark are mentioned by him as direct fulfilments of prophecy, Matthew iii. 3 and xiii. 14, 15. Q contains barely half a dozen such quotations, and of these only those which occur in the Temptation narrative are taken from the LXX, the rest being somewhat loose references rather than direct quotations.

Again there is no allusion in Q to the fulfilment of prophecy. Matthew inserts three quotations (all cited as fulfilled prophecy) in passages which he derives from Mark, and *none* of these is taken from the LXX. In viii. 17 and xiii. 35 we have a completely independent rendering of the Hebrew text, and in xxi. 5 we have a quotation which is near the LXX, but is still nearer the M.T. In passages ' peculiar ' to Matthew we have seven passages quoted as fulfilled prophecy, of which only one (i. 23, emphasizing the word ' virgin ') is taken from the Greek text, and even here the wording is not identical. In the other six the quotation is either an independent translation from the M.T. or from some Hebrew text which differs from that which has become traditional. An interesting case is found in Matthew xxvii. 9–10, which is cited as from Jeremiah, though the nearest parallel (there is no Old Testament passage with a close resemblance) is in Zechariah xi. 12–13. We have thus all told a dozen passages quoted as being ' fulfilled ' in Jesus. Of these two are taken direct from Mark, and the LXX is closely followed, and in one other (possibly two others) we can observe the influence of the LXX. The rest have all been translated into Greek independently from a Hebrew text which may or may not be identical with the M.T.

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the evangelist had before him a collection of oracles originally compiled in the original Hebrew. The instance of Matthew xiii. 14–15 suggests that he himself used a Greek version by preference, and makes it probable that his ' oracles ' had already been rendered into Greek before they came into his hands. This seems to correspond fairly exactly with what we should expect if the ' logia ' of Papias were suitable proof-texts of

the kind so familiar in this gospel. The fact that these 'logia' were said to have been collected by Matthew would account for the association of the gospel in which they are most used with that apostle.

The evangelist has, of course, much other material on which to draw, and for the most part it is impossible for us to trace its source. But he does seem to have access to a number of narratives which introduce Peter more prominently than the other apostles, and it has been suggested that there was a collection of the Acts of Peter or of stories relating to him which may have been in the writer's hands.

We have next to consider the use the evangelist made of the material that lay before him. His literary methods and habits are first to be studied by comparison with Mark, for there we have undoubtedly the original before us in practically the form which was known to the writer of this gospel. We can see that a definite effort is made to report every event included in the source, and, generally, in the place in which it occurs in Mark. But the writer had a great deal of material before him, and he was limited by the conventional length of the ancient book. In dealing, then, with each incident, he reduces the narrative to its shortest possible form. Thus the story of the Gadarene demoniac occupies seven verses in Matthew (viii. 28–34) and twenty in Mark (v. 1–20), and the following narrative, the healing of Jairus's daughter and the cure of the woman with the issue, contains nine and twenty-three verses in the two gospels respectively. It is, however, noteworthy that the later gospel has omitted less of the actual words spoken in the conversations than of the details of the events themselves.

We shall expect the same methods to be applied to other narratives, where we can no longer identify the source, and so, for instance, in the story of the healing of the centurion's servant we shall prefer the Lucan form, and assume that Matthew has abbreviated this as well as other narratives.

Where spoken words are involved, this evangelist is much more careful to repeat the *ipsissima verba* of his source, and,

unless we have good reason to the contrary, i.e. unless we find that the Matthean form of a saying suggests one or other of the favourite interests and tendencies of Matthew, we shall assume that where there are alternative forms his will be nearer to the original.

We have next to notice the way in which he constructs his book. He follows the Marcan order in the main, but has a habit of grouping his material together, so as to illustrate some feature of the life and work of Jesus. Thus in chaps. v.–vii. we have the well-known 'Sermon on the Mount,' which is clearly compiled by the evangelist from several sources, some of which are found separately in Luke, while others have no parallel elsewhere. Chap. viii. groups a number of miracles, chap. xiii. a number of parables. Twice we have in Matthew a section which is conflate, each being produced by the interweaving of two passages, one taken from Mark, the other from Q. One of these deals with the mission of the Twelve (Mark), into which the writer has dovetailed a good deal of material drawn from the mission of the Seventy (Q) ; the other with the great eschatological discourse, whose two elements are Mark xiii. and a passage from Q represented in Luke xvii.

The gospel of Mark is the history of the ministry of Jesus, not given *in extenso*, but with each of the decisive periods illustrated. Thus a specimen day is taken from the early Galilean period, and described in detail. This may be typical of the whole of that period, which ends when the hostility of the Pharisees and of the Herodians is aroused against him by actions of which five characteristic specimens are described. The certainty of this hostility produces a change in the methods of Jesus : he selects a special body of men to whom he may confine himself, instead of scattering his teaching broadcast ; he adopts the parable for public instruction, and, finally, tries to leave Galilee in order to spend more time with his disciples. At last they admit that he is the Christ, and he at once tells them what manner of Christ he is to be, and starts on the journey to Jerusalem where he is to meet his death. Through this final period we have vividly presented

the contrast between the two conceptions of the Messiah, that of the world (including the disciples) and that of Jesus himself. In the end he has to die before even those nearest to him grasp his point of view. He therefore enters Jerusalem as the triumphant Messiah, in a few days excites the hostility of the official classes by his outlook, methods, and teaching, and at last attains the death he seeks, the death of the Cross. Finally, in the incomplete conclusion we have the beginning of that resurrection story whose termination we have to gather from the narrative in Matthew.

The First Gospel, more or less unconsciously, follows this same scheme, but with different groupings and a different stress. The gospel falls into five main sections:

A. Chaps. i.–ii. The Origin of Jesus.
B. „ iii.–xvi. The Galilean Ministry.
C. „ xvii.–xx. The New Messiahship.
D. „ xxi.–xxv. Jesus in Jerusalem.
E. „ xxvi.–xxviii. The End—and the Beginning.

It will be seen at once how much the writer is influenced by the Marcan order, but, in pursuance of his purpose to exhibit Jesus as the Messiah, he has to give an account of the way he came into the world, tracing back his origin to the father of the Jewish people. The second section (B) exhibits the widest divergences from the order of Mark, for it is here that most of Matthew's grouping of kindred subjects takes place. We thus find the following scheme worked out:

I. iii. 1–iv. 16. Preparation.
II. iv. 17–25. The Starting of the Ministry.
III. v.–vii. A Body of Teaching (the Sermon on the Mount).
IV. viii. 1–ix. 34. A Group of Miracles.
V. ix. 35–x. 42. The Apostolic Mission.
VI. xi.–xii. Jesus and his Jewish Public.
VII. xiii. A Group of Parables.
VIII. xiv.–xvi. Jesus in Exile.

Whilst the general order of the two gospels is the same here, a glance at this scheme shews the difference in point of view. Two at least of the miracles recorded in IV are found also in Mark ii. The latter introduces them as illustrating the causes of Pharisaic hostility to Jesus; Matthew mentions them simply because they are miracles. And it is noticeable that the miraculous element is heightened in more than one narrative. The Marcan form of the raising of Jairus's daughter leaves it open to us to believe that the child has simply swooned; Matthew allows no doubt as to the actual death. The five thousand who are miraculously fed include the whole body in Mark; in Matthew the figure refers only to adult males, and there are women and children as well. Mark always has a further purpose in recording a miracle; to Matthew it is enough that it is a miracle.

The third section (C) simply follows Mark with a few insertions, and we fail to detect any additional inner unity between the passages included. In the fourth (D) we find a real progress, noting as subdivisions:

I. xxi.–xxii. The Challenge of the Christ.
II. xxiii. Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees.
III. xxiv.–xxv. An Eschatological Discourse.

The main difference from Mark is to be seen in the third of these sub-sections, where Matthew has greatly expanded the Marcan discourse, and has added much other material, both from Q and elsewhere.

In the last section (E) Mark is closely followed, and almost the same divisions would serve for both Gospels:

I. xxvi. 1–16. Final Preparations.
II. xxvi. 17–46. The Last Night.
III. xxvi. 47–xxvii. 31. The Arrest and the Trial.
IV. xxvii. 32–66. The Cross and the Tomb.
V. xxviii. The Resurrection and the Great Commission.

And so the gospel ends with the double note—the world-wide kingdom and the eternally present Christ.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

A. CHAPS. I–II: THE ORIGIN OF JESUS

THE evangelist in the main follows the history as given in Mark, but to this he prefixes a short statement of how Jesus came into the world. He has to present him as the Messiah and as the fulfilment of prophecy, and seeks to shew how both requirements are met even from before his birth.

i.

The birth-roll of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of 1
Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, 2
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the 3
father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez the father of
Hezron, Hezron the father of Aram, Aram the father of 4
Aminadab, Aminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon
the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz by 5
Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, Obed the father 6
of Jessai, and Jessai the father of king David.

David was the father of Solomon by Uriah's wife, Solomon 7
the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa, Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, 8
Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of
Uzziah, Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father 9
of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah the 10
father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of 11
Jechoniah and his brothers at the period of the Babylonian
captivity. After the Babylonian captivity, Jechoniah 12
was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerub-
babel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father 13
of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father 14
of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, Achim the father

15 of Eliud, Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father
16 of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Joseph, and Joseph (to whom the virgin Mary was betrothed) the father of Jesus, who is called ' Christ.'
17 Thus all the generations from Abraham to David number fourteen, from David to the Babylonian captivity fourteen, and from the Babylonian captivity to Christ fourteen.

The birth-roll of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. These words form an announcement of the purpose with which the whole book is written. Jesus is the Messiah ; in him will the promises made to the people of Israel find their fulfilment. In him will all the families of the earth be blessed (a misinterpretation of Genesis xii. 3, which goes back at least to the LXX and dominated all later exegesis) ; through him Israel will receive all that wealth of messianic glory which was associated with the seed of David. The two essential points in the genealogy are thus stressed in the title sentence ; Jesus is not only the purveyor of the blessing of Abraham, he is also the Davidic Messiah.

The list of names has other features. The division into three periods is significant, and the evangelist takes care to make the three symmetrical. The number fourteen is not achieved without some difficulty. It is the figure furnished by tradition in the first section, but the second contains too many names, and no less than four of the kings of Judah (Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, and Jehoiakim) are omitted. Possibly the last should be inserted, for the last period (which we cannot check from other records) contains only thirteen generations, and it has been suggested that Jeconiah should stand only at the head of this list, while the name of his father (instead of Jeconiah) closes the previous table. But this does not relieve the difficulty of the other omissions, which stand all together in history. It is true that Semitic idiom spoke of a man as being the ' son ' of any of his direct ancestors, however remote, but that explanation does not touch the figure given. Clearly the genealogy in this second section has been artificially constructed.

We have no parallel for the third table, beyond Zerubbabel, but the wide variation from the list given in Luke makes it uncertain which we are to accept. Even the name of Joseph's father is different in the two gospels, and the attempts made in ancient times to reconcile the two accounts by reference to the practice of levirate marriage can hardly be called successful. It will also be noted that the genealogy makes Joseph the father of Jesus. This is the original reading, and the formula in the traditional text is an accommodation to the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. Apart from the fact that the Old Syriac version, one of the most ancient witnesses to the text, uses the phrase translated by Dr. Moffatt, the whole genealogy is meaningless if it does not contemplate Joseph as the actual father of Jesus.

We must rather interpret the genealogy along other lines. It is intended to give us the place of Jesus in world-history, and we shall be on safer ground if we detect in it a flavour of allegory. Jesus, the Messiah, is to be the King of the Jews, and, ultimately, of all humanity. Therefore this evangelist, unlike the Third, traces his descent through the line of the kings of the house of David, who alone are recognized as the legitimate sovereigns of the Chosen People. He is to have a wider sovereignty than his own race can offer, therefore four women are mentioned in the list—all of them foreigners. The whole is clinched by the sacred number, doubled, and then thrice repeated, the number fourteen being also the sum of the name of David according to the principles of ' Gematria.'

The birth of [Jesus] Christ came about thus. His mother 18
Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they came
together she was discovered to be pregnant by the holy
Spirit. As Joseph her husband was a just man and 19
unwilling to disgrace her, he resolved to divorce her
secretly ; but after he had planned this, there appeared 20
an angel of the Lord to him in a dream saying, ' Joseph,
son of David, fear not to take Mary your wife home, for
what is begotten in her comes from the holy Spirit. She 21
will bear a son, and you will call him " Jesus," for he will

22 **save his people from their sins.' All this happened for the fulfilment of what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:**

23 *The maiden will conceive and bear a son,*
and his name will be called Immanuel

24 **(which may be translated,** *God is with us*). **So on waking from sleep Joseph did as the angel of the Lord had com-**
25 **manded him; he took his wife home, but he did not live with her as a husband till she bore a son, whom he called Jesus.**

The significant events which preceded the birth of Jesus. Mary is discovered to be pregnant, and the force of the betrothal is such that this is equivalent to evidence of adultery. Her future husband, Joseph, however, is a just man and unwilling to disgrace her, but before he can take any action at all he receives a divine revelation in a dream, whereby he learns that, in accordance with prophecy, the child has been conceived of the holy Spirit, while the mother remains virgin. The name of the child is to be Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. The instructions are faithfully carried out.

The passage illustrates two of the evangelist's characteristics, his interest in the fulfilment of prophecy and his theological position. The verse which he quotes from Isaiah vii. 14 is a familiar 'proof-text' known and constantly used in the early church, especially in arguing with the Jew. It is cited from the LXX, and is, unfortunately, somewhat misleading in the Greek form. The Hebrew has no thought of a miraculous birth, for the term rendered maiden simply means an adult woman, still young enough to become a mother, and is by no means confined to virgins. This has been recognized by Jewish scholars for centuries, and is admitted by Christian students of the Old Testament. Nevertheless the verse and its application played an important part in shaping the thought of the Christian church on the subject of the divinity of Christ.

This leads to the second point, best, perhaps, brought out by the phrase 'what is begotten in her comes from the holy Spirit.' This is no place for a detailed discussion of the

doctrine of the Virgin Birth, but it is impossible to pass the question by without reference. There are minds to which this doctrine is inextricably interwoven with the belief in the divinity of our Lord; such was the mind of this evangelist, and of many to-day. Some find it possible to believe (as Mohammed did) in the Virgin Birth of Jesus and yet to deny his divinity, while others again believe that he came naturally into the world and yet recognize in him God made manifest in the flesh. It is urged, on the one hand, that the whole atmosphere of this passage and of the parallel (though very different) passage in Luke is essentially Jewish, and that it is impossible that such a doctrine could have arisen unless it were based on known facts. There is further the natural reluctance which every devout reader of the New Testament feels to abandoning as unhistorical a statement of facts so circumstantially described. On the other hand, it is beyond question that the doctrine receives no mention in the New Testament except here and in Luke i. 34 f. This, in itself, would hardly prove a serious obstacle to any serious thinker, but to it must be added the nearly irreconcilable differences between the two accounts of the birth of Jesus, not only in this, but also in other portions of the early chapters of Matthew and Luke.

The physical miracle is comparatively seldom a fatal difficulty to the modern mind, which, if anything, is a little more inclined to be too credulous than too sceptical, but there are many to whom the real objection is theological. There is a growing feeling that the Incarnation, to be complete, must have begun with a natural birth, and that unless Jesus is fully human on both sides, he fails to express such a complete divine sympathy with a suffering and erring humanity as that maintained, for instance, by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews. It is easy to see how such a belief may, nay almost must, have arisen in a circle which believed on the one hand that sexual relations were, even in legitimate marriage, sinful, and on the other hand that there was an hereditary chain, not merely of tendency to sin but also of actual guilt. Both these points of view are characteristic of the ancient East, and it is signif-

icant that a doctrine of the Virgin Birth grew up in Buddhism —though, possibly, under Christian influence. But whilst it is easy to see how the doctrine may have arisen from natural causes, it is necessary also to remember that it was well established before the end of the first century. Though their narratives are so different from one another, neither Matthew nor Luke gives the impression that he is trying to establish a new article in the creed, and each tells his story as if it were a record of familiar fact.

ii.

1 Now when Jesus was born at Bethlehem, belonging to Judaea,
in the days of king Herod, magicians from the East
2 arrived at Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the newly-born
king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose, and we
3 have come to worship him.' The news of this troubled
4 king Herod and all Jerusalem as well; so he gathered
all the high priests and scribes of the people and made
inquiries of them about where the messiah was to be born.
5 They told him, 'In Bethlehem belonging to Judaea; for
thus it is written by the prophet:

6 *And you Bethlehem, in Judah's land,*
You are not least among the rulers of Judah:
For a ruler will come from you,
Who will shepherd Israel my people.'

7 Then Herod summoned the magicians in secret and
ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance.
8 He also sent them to Bethlehem, telling them, 'Go and
make a careful search for the child, and when you have
found him report to me, so that I can go and worship
9 him too.' The magicians listened to the king and then
went their way. And the star they had seen rise went
in front of them till it stopped over the place where the
10 child was. When they caught sight of the star they
11 were intensely glad. And on reaching the house they
saw the child with his mother Mary, they fell down to
worship him, and opening their caskets they offered
12 him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Then,

as they had been divinely warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by a different road.

Both the canonical accounts of the birth of Jesus place the event in the reign of Herod the Great, and both say that Jesus was born at Bethlehem. But that is very nearly the full extent of their agreement. In Luke we find that the presence of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem is accidental, and is due to the demands of the imperial census; their proper home is Nazareth. Matthew, on the other hand, seems to place them at Bethlehem from the first, and attributes their removal to Nazareth to the danger of remaining in the dominions of Archelaus. Here we have no hint of the manger or of the shepherds; instead this gospel gives us the story of the magicians from the East. Once more we are conscious of the double purpose in the record. Jesus is essentially the Messiah of the Jews, but his kingdom is to be world-wide, and already the 'first fruits of the Gentiles' come to offer their homage. Tradition has since been busy with the beautiful story, and later generations have had much to say of the personality of the visitors and of their later history. But in this gospel they are strictly representative, and have a definite part to play in the narrative; that accomplished, they disappear. The story is well articulated, for not only do the strangers fulfil their immediate function, they are also responsible for Herod's unsuccessful attempt on the life of Jesus.

Such narratives are found elsewhere in the biographies of great leaders of men, but that need not in itself throw any doubt on the historicity of the gospel story. Every character in it is drawn true to life. We have the magicians, properly priests of the Persian astrological cults, who are naturally concerned with the stars, and have been convinced by their observations that some unique personality has entered the world. There has been a good deal of discussion as to the actual phenomenon referred to; for instance, Halley's comet was visible in or about the year 11 B.C., and Kepler remarked

that the year 7 B.C. witnessed the rare conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter. But it is unnecessary to identify the actual star. The magicians, the world's greatest astronomers, saw something which led them to believe that a unique person was born, and they acted on their belief, coming to do homage and present the typical royal gifts of their distant eastern land. The traditional spot where Jesus was born was either an 'inn' (so Luke), or a cave. Neither could properly be called a house, and that term is possibly due to a mistranslation of an Aramaic word meaning 'inside.'

Equally characteristic is the conduct of Herod, now old, morose, suspicious, and therefore cruel. It was inevitable that the news of a newly-born king of the Jews should trouble king Herod, and it was natural that in these moods of fear he should see that his anxiety spread to all Jerusalem as well. The magicians are simple-minded Oriental scholars, and it is easy for him to play upon them for the achievement of his ends; they have no suspicion of the sinister meaning that lies behind Herod's desire to come and worship too. At the same time he is careful to secure accurate information as to the time of the star's appearance, so that when he acts he shall know roughly whom to destroy, for it is clear that the bare mention of a possible pretender, even though he is but an infant, has led him to form his plans.

Finally, the high priests and scribes perform their proper task, and point Herod to the proper passage from which he can identify the birth-place of the Messiah. This was one of the regular proof-texts, and the apologetic purpose of the writer is well exhibited in this passage. Even the classes who later were to be the bitterest opponents of Jesus testify to the fact that his birth at Bethlehem is a direct fulfilment of this well-known passage in Micah v. 2. The quotation seems to be very loose, and corresponds neither to the M.T. nor to the LXX. The suggestion is that it is an independent translation from a text which differed considerably from the traditional Hebrew. It does, however, fairly represent the text, which leaves no doubt that the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem.

After they had gone, there appeared an angel of the Lord 13
to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt; stay there till I tell you. For Herod is going to search for the child and destroy him.' So he got up, took the child and his mother by 14
night, and went off to Egypt, where he stayed until the 15
death of Herod. This was to fulfil what the Lord had said by the prophet: *I called my Son from Egypt.*

The flight into Egypt needs little or no comment. It was inevitable that Jesus should be carried away in flight, for Herod's action could not long be delayed. As in the conception narrative, Joseph receives his information in a dream. The passage closes with a quotation from Hosea xi. 1, in which the words seem to be an independent translation of the M.T.; the LXX had a slightly different reading. In themselves Hosea's words are not strictly messianic, for the Son is the people of Israel, not the Christ, and the quotation illustrates the principle of anti-Jewish apologetic which insists that every event in the life of Jesus must have been foretold somewhere in the Old Testament.

Then Herod saw the magicians had trifled with him, and he 16
was furiously angry; he sent and slew all the male children in Bethlehem and in all the neighbourhood who were two years old or under, calculating by the time he had ascertained from the magicians. Then the saying 17
was fulfilled which had been uttered by the prophet Jeremiah:

> *A cry was heard in Rama,* 18
> *weeping and sore lamentation—*
> *Rachel weeping for her children,*
> *and inconsolable because they are no more.*

We are led to suppose that if Herod could have secured the information he wanted from the magicians, he would have been content with the death of Jesus alone. Failing that exact detail which they alone could supply, he had no guide except the general statement that the star had appeared less

than two years before their arrival at Jerusalem. The time suggests that they had made a very long journey to see Jesus. In order to secure his end, Herod **sent and slew all the male children in Bethlehem . . . who were two years old and under.** Similar stories are told of other attempts to get rid of possible rivals to a throne. There is a tradition, for instance, that the slaughter of Hebrew children in Egypt was due to a prophecy concerning Moses, and Egyptian literature contains at least one narrative with the same motif. Once more we have a quotation from the Old Testament, this time from Jeremiah xxxi. 15. Again the words differ somewhat from the LXX, though they represent a Hebrew text which is materially the same, and are probably the result of independent translation. The quotation does not appeal to a modern reader as being particularly suitable. Ramah, where Rachel was buried, is some distance to the north of Jerusalem, and the children of Judah were not strictly descended from Rachel. Again, it is clear that it is the tradition which has led to the selection of the proof-text, not the proof-text which is responsible for the tradition.

19 **But when Herod died, there appeared an angel of the Lord**
20 **in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those**
21 **who sought the child's life are dead.' So he rose, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel;**
22 **but on hearing that Archelaus reigned over Judaea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there and, by a divine injunction in a dream, withdrew to the region**
23 **of Galilee. He went and settled in a town called Nazaret, so that what had been said by the prophets might be fulfilled: 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'**

Herod died in the year 4 B.C., and his dominions were divided amongst his family. **Archelaus reigned over Judah,** including also Samaria and Idumaea, but Galilee was handed over to Herod Antipas. Archelaus seems to have inherited his father's vices without his strength and abilities, and there was some reason to fear the effects of his cruelty. The narra-

tive has two further points of interest. In the first place the tradition followed by Matthew, namely that the original home of Joseph and Mary was Bethlehem, needs to be adapted to the undoubted fact that Jesus was brought up at Nazareth in Galilee. It will be remembered that Luke explains this possible discrepancy by bringing the parents to Bethlehem for the census and making their earlier home at Nazareth. It was, then, natural for them to return as soon as they had fulfilled their obligations and been enrolled. But Matthew suggests that Jesus would have been brought up at Bethlehem but for the known character of Archelaus.

The second point is the reference to prophecy, which has hitherto baffled all commentators. There is no passage in the Old Testament to which these words can be referred, and the reference is not to a single prophet, named or unnamed, as in vers. 6, 15, and 18, but is more general—**so that what had been said by the prophets might be fulfilled.** We are left to suppose that the residence in Nazareth was a fulfilment of a general position held by the prophets as a body. But what was that position? Nazareth is nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament, and most of the familiar suggestions point to a particular passage rather than to a general principle. Thus a reference to a Hebrew phrase in Isaiah xi. 1, implying that Jesus was the 'branch' (*Nezer*) who was to spring from the stump of the fallen tree of Jesse, would naturally have been referred by the evangelist to Isaiah. Nor is there evidence to shew that **Nazarene** was a term of reproach till it was applied to the despised Christians. We must confess to an unsolved puzzle.

B. CHAPS. III–XVI: THE GALILEAN MINISTRY

In the birth-narratives Matthew has been using sources for which we have no other evidence. Now that he has passed beyond this and begins the record of the public ministry of Jesus, he is able to follow the general order of the gospel according to Mark, which he certainly has before him. He uses the narrative portions of this gospel as his framework,

and from time to time inserts material derived from other sources as he thinks suitable. In the main he follows carefully the order of his source, and in his record of events departs from it only four times in the whole of this portion of the gospel. The ' dislocated ' sections are : (i) the cure of Peter's mother-in-law (viii. 14–17 = Mark i. 29–34), placed after the healing of the leper, instead of before it ; (ii) a group of miracles, (*a*) the stilling of the storm (viii. 19, 23–27 = Mark iv. 35–41), (*b*) the Gadarene demoniac (viii. 28–34 = Mark v. 1–20), (*c*) the raising of the daughter of Jairus and the cure of the woman with an issue of blood (ix. 18–26 = Mark v. 21–43) ; (iii) the selection of the Twelve, placed immediately before their evangelical mission (x. 1–4 = Mark iii. 13–19) ; and (iv) the mission of the Twelve itself (x. 5, 9–14 = Mark vi. 7–13). This gospel omits altogether the cure of the demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum (Mark i. 21–28), the departure of Jesus from Capernaum (Mark i. 35–39), the use of a boat for teaching (Mark iii. 7–12), and the cure of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark viii. 22–26). It is clear that the evangelist did not regard these last four events as being significant from his point of view : the two miracles can be paralleled elsewhere and the other two details did not seem to be important. The four dislocations are to be attributed to his habit of grouping the material which he found ready to his hand. Much greater dislocations are to be found in the transference of the teaching of Jesus from one gospel to the other, but these again are due to the tendency to gather together passages which dealt with the same subject.

I. iii. 1–iv. 16 : The Preparation for the Ministry

For the outline Mark is closely followed, with two or three insertions from other sources, some of which this gospel shares with Luke. The narrative records the preparation of the local world through the preaching of John, the identification of Jesus as the Messiah at his baptism, and the temptation in the wilderness, closing with his removal from Nazareth to Capernaum. The insertions from Q are intended to illustrate and expand material already in Mark.

iii.

In those days John the Baptist came on the scene, preaching 1
in the desert of Judaea, 'Repent, the Reign of heaven is 2
near.' (This was the man spoken of by the prophet 3
Isaiah:

The voice of one who cries in the desert,
'Make the way ready for the Lord,
level the paths for him.')

This John had his clothes made of camel's hair, with a 4
leather girdle round his loins; his food was locusts and
wild honey. Then Jerusalem and the whole of Judaea and 5
all the Jordan-district went out to him and got baptized by 6
him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he 7
noticed a number of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming
for his baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers,
who told you to flee from the coming Wrath? Now, 8
produce fruit that answers to your repentance, instead 9
of presuming to say to yourselves, "We have a father in
Abraham." I tell you, God can raise up children for
Abraham from these stones! The axe is lying all ready 10
at the root of the trees; any tree that is not producing
good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

I baptize you with water for repentance, 11
but he who is coming after me is mightier,
and I am not fit even to carry his sandals;
he will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire.
His winnowing-fan is in his hand, 12
he will clean out his threshing-floor,
his wheat he will gather into the granary,
but the straw he will burn with fire unquenchable.'

Vers. 1–6, 11, are taken from Mark, the rest from Q.

It was held throughout the popular Jewish teaching that the Messiah should be heralded by an 'Elijah.' He was not to appear without warning, but the way was to be made ready for him. So the work of Jesus naturally begins with John the Baptist, who in those days (not, of course, with refer-

ence to chap. ii., but generally indicating the time with which all Christians were familiar) **came on the scene, preaching in the desert of Judaea, 'Repent, the Reign of heaven is near.'** From the first, then, the message had an apocalyptic tone, and John announces himself as the last of the Jewish eschatologists. He is recognized as fulfilling the oracle found in Isaiah xl. 3, and the quotation is duly repeated from Mark in the form found in the LXX.

John is strictly in the line of Amos. The Day of the Lord is at hand, but it will not be a day of merely national vindication. It will rather be a time when the moral and spiritual principles of God will be made manifest in the utter destruction of all who are opposed in life and aim to His will. Therefore the appeal is **Repent, the Reign of heaven is near.'** The Aramaic word which John used for 'repent' might be literally rendered 'be converted,' 'turn round and go back'; there is no safety in the course which men are now pursuing.

The messianic element in the new movement is brought out in the very garb worn by the Forerunner. He adopts the ascetic appearance which had marked Elijah, particularly **his clothes made of camel's hair,** and thereby fulfils the popular expectation of what the predecessor of the Messiah was to be. The narrative, still following Mark, brings out clearly the unrest, the mental tumult, the hopes and possibilities of the age. Men were looking for the appearance of some new portent; their minds, fed on the apocalyptic speculation of the last century and a half, were ready to welcome any person or movement that seemed to promise an overthrow of existing conditions and the establishment of a new time. John's appearance, his rough vigour, the force of his language, and the announcement of a great change, combined to attract to him men from the whole of central and southern Palestine— **Jerusalem and the whole of Judaea and all the Jordan-district went out to him and got baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.**

John himself was obviously conscious of the importance of his message. He felt the near approach of the final revolution in human life of which he knew himself to be the herald.

and he tried to stress the fact that only those who could claim moral purity were fit to participate in the coming triumph. He sought to prepare a body of men who should be ready for the Messiah when he came, and though there is no suggestion that he tried to organize them, his general purpose is clear. The warriors and followers of the Christ must have no sense of sin upon their conscience. As a ceremony of initiation he used the familiar Jewish rite of immersion in water, especially applied to proselytes entering the Jewish community. This meant that he was establishing a new order, an Israel within Israel, composed of men who had abjured their sins by confession, and were thus ready to uphold the cause when the time came. If men were not conscious of having sins to confess, he administered (so it would seem) baptism to them as being men whose souls were already purified from sin. The rite was not intended to have any definite effects on the new recruits, beyond strengthening their purpose and committing them to the cause of the Kingdom. The Aramaic verb is active, not passive; **they got baptized.** Baptism was not something that was done to them, it was something that they did; they professed themselves to be fit and proper members of the new order.

But it was only men of whose sincerity John was convinced that he thus admitted to the new Order of the Kingdom. The evangelist here inserts a few sentences from Q into Mark's narrative, illustrating the discrimination and the fiery temper of the new preacher. **He noticed a number of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his baptism.** These were not the men he wanted. Neither party had any real sympathy with the eschatological position of John, who was more nearly allied to the Zealots than to any other Jewish sect. They represented the supreme authority in church and state, and a revolutionary so fervent as John looked for the overthrow of both in the coming Wrath. To him they were deadly snakes—**broods of vipers**—and stood for the very institutions which were most dangerous to the messianic kingdom. Possibly he suspected them of seeking

to enter the number of the newly enrolled in order to try to control the movement; certainly he realized that they claimed membership on account of their official position and national standing. To his passionate spiritual enthusiasm these qualifications were worthless: it was nothing that they had a father in Abraham. Their life was the only test which he would accept as evidence of their repentance, and unless they produced good fruit, they would be swept away in the impending cataclysm.

The narrative reverts for a sentence to that of Mark. John insists that it is not he himself who is to be the Messiah, for he is only preparing the way. The Christ is near, mightier than John, so much so that the latter is unfit to perform the office of the meanest slave and carry his sandals. The 'might' of the coming Lord lies here: all that John could do was to warn and to baptize, and, further, his baptism with water did nothing; it was a sign, a rite, a token, a symbol of a pure heart, nothing more. It was utterly powerless to change the heart itself, as John himself had suggested in speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees. But the Messiah would do something to men themselves. His activities would not be confined to the enrolment of men for service, or to a declaratory ritual. As John had immersed men in physical water, the Christ would plunge them into the very Spirit of God—the holy Spirit—the source of all inspiration and the energy behind all goodness. This would fill them, overwhelm them, control them, transform them. From ancient days he who had come under the influence of that Spirit had 'become another man,' and so it would be again. But not all would be in a state to be inspired, and that same force which meant a new kind of life to some would mean destruction to others. The nobler elements would be intensified beyond measure, but at the same time the baser would be eliminated. He would baptize, not only with the holy Spirit, but also with fire.

This discriminating function of the Messiah is emphasized in a sentence not found in Mark, but appearing also in Luke. Part of the preparation of corn for food lay in the winnowing.

It was threshed on the hilltop, on the threshing-floor, but then there lay on the ground a mixed mass of chaff and wheat. The farmer brought his **winnowing-fan**, a kind of broad shovel or basket, and tossed masses into the air. The light chaff was blown away by the wind, while the heavier grain fell back to the ground. So the coming Christ will distinguish and will apportion to each class its inevitable fate.

Then Jesus came on the scene from Galilee, to get baptized 13
by John at the Jordan. John tried to prevent him; 'I 14
need to get baptized by you,' he said, 'and you come to
me!' But Jesus answered him, 'Come now, this is 15
how we should fulfil all our duty to God.' Then John
gave in to him. Now when Jesus had been baptized, 16
the moment he rose out of the water, the heavens opened
and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove
upon him. And a voice from heaven said, 17
'This is my Son, the Beloved,
in him is my delight.'

Here, when the whole stage is prepared, **Jesus came on the scene.** The outline of the narrative is taken from Mark, but in vers. 14 and 15 this evangelist has inserted a short dialogue which is not found elsewhere. Its purpose is clearly to shew that John recognized Jesus, and knew him to be the Messiah. John could baptize others with water, as he said, but when he who baptizes with the holy Spirit comes, John has **need to get baptized by** him. Elsewhere it is only in the Fourth Gospel that John thus testified to the Messiahship of Jesus. Even Luke, who calls attention to the kinship between Jesus and John, has no word of their personal relationships.

The answer of Jesus, that he would thus fulfil his **duty to God**, may throw some light on one, at least, of the questions which beset us when we contemplate the baptism of Jesus. Others came confessing their sins; as we believe, Jesus had no sins to confess. As we have seen, there is a hint (in Josephus) that John did not so much demand confession as a consciousness of moral and spiritual purity. If a man had sin

on his conscience, this state could only be reached by confession; otherwise there would naturally be no need for it. We can only with diffidence and reverence approach the inner life and thought of Jesus, and he never tells us when he became conscious of his Messiahship. It is therefore open to us to believe that he came to John, as others did, prepared to enrol himself among the servants of the new Kingdom, and in this capacity felt it 'becoming' to submit to the same ritual as the rest. It was only when he had actually passed through it, and **saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove upon him**, that he first realized the part he was to play—he was himself to be the Messiah. The truth is finally brought home to him by the Voice—in Mark, apparently, heard by himself alone, in this gospel addressed to others about him—which claimed him as unique. The word rendered 'Beloved' means literally 'that with which one must be content,' and is often used in Greek literature, even in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, of an only son. To his ear, then, the words meant, 'This is my Son, **the Unique, in him is my delight.**' Hereafter there could be no doubt in his mind. He was to be the Messiah—he *was* the Messiah, and had to bear upon himself the salvation, first of his own people, then of all the sinful human race.

iv.

1 Then Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted
2 by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights and
3 afterwards felt hungry. So the tempter came up and
said to him, 'If you are God's Son, tell these stones to
4 become loaves.' He answered, 'It is written,

Man is not to live on bread alone,
but on every word that issues from the mouth of God.'

5 Then the devil conveyed him to the holy city and, placing
6 him on the pinnacle of the temple, said to him, 'If you
are God's Son, throw yourself down; for it is written,

He will give his angels charge of you;
they will bear you on their hands,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.

**Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, *You shall not* 7
tempt the Lord your God.' Once more the devil conveyed 8
him to an exceedingly high mountain and showed him all
the realms of the world and their grandeur; he said, 'I 9
will give you all that if you will fall down and worship
me.' Then Jesus told him, 'Begone, Satan! it is 10
written, *You must worship the Lord your God, and serve
him alone.'* At this the devil left him, and angels came 11
up and ministered to him.**

The evangelist has expanded a couple of verses from Mark (Mark i. 12, 13) by inserting a detailed account of three of the forms in which temptation came to Jesus. These three incidents are also included in Luke, though the order of the last two is altered. We shall miss the true import of the passage unless we realize that these forms of temptation were not confined to this one occasion, but were typical of the inner life of Jesus throughout the whole of his ministry. There is no appeal to the lower nature or to the grosser forms of sin. The temptations are such as could come only to one who was conscious of a great mission and of special powers. It is inevitable that we should connect this with the sudden realization of his messianic function, and the possibilities that must have opened swiftly before him.

He fasted forty days and forty nights, as the Oriental does instinctively whenever he faces some special spiritual needs. No doubt this practice renders men more susceptible to unusual experiences, and, by the very exhaustion of the physical frame, enhances the spiritual perceptions. Whilst such conditions thus render men more ready to receive the message of God, it is equally true that they are more exposed to suggestions of evil. A state of exaltation is dangerous just in proportion to its intensity; it was when Jesus felt hungry **that the tempter came up to him.**

The first two temptations depend on the miraculous powers which the Messiah possessed, and of which Jesus must have felt conscious. He was hungry, there was no food available, but he could, if he wished, tell the **stones to become loaves.**

This is the temptation to use his powers for the satisfaction of his own material needs. This is countered by a quotation (reported verbatim in the form in which it appears in the LXX) from Deuteronomy viii. 3 : **Man is not to live on bread alone, but on every word that issues from the mouth of God.** As far as physical needs are concerned, Jesus accepts the conditions and limitations of ordinary humanity, and claims man's common resources. It is not necessary for his work that he should exercise his powers in the way suggested to him, because it is not necessary for him to eat at this moment. If special supply is needed, special supply will be granted; at no time and in no circumstances must he use his new abilities for the satisfaction of his personal appetites. We may suspect also that there is a reference to his great mission. He had to feed those of his own people and others who **felt hungry** for God. Yet even here he must not use magical or abnormal methods. He could have converted the world by miracle—so he may have felt; the way laid upon him was the way of the Cross.

The second temptation is also concerned with miracle, but is more subtle. It is backed by an appeal to that very faith which manifested itself in the rejection of the first temptation. Jesus believed that God would care for him, and this conviction is supported by reference to Psalm xci. 11, 12 (the language is again that of the LXX, though the second part of ver. 11 is omitted). He is **God's Son** (attested as such at his baptism) and if he **throw** himself **down** from a **pinnacle of the Temple**, he may be sure of miraculous protection. Jesus, recalling Deuteronomy vi. 16 (again quoted verbatim from the LXX), realizes at once that this would be to **tempt the Lord.** It would imply, not faith but mistrust, an uncertainty as to whether God would really do what he had promised to do. We are thus introduced to one of the principles which Jesus seems to have recognized as fundamental, a law of the economy of miracle. What no man could do, God would do. When man had done his utmost and there was no way of escape, then God might intervene in some abnormal way, through the suspension of the ordinary processes of the

universe. But man has no right to expect this; above all things he must refrain from acting rashly in the hope that a miracle will be performed. God will not—nay, cannot, without being false to Himself—intervene to save one who has deliberately challenged and disregarded the methods He Himself employs in the management of the universe. A man may feel compelled, for the achievement of some higher end, to risk destruction, even to put himself in a position in which destruction seems inevitable. But he must do so with his eyes open, with no expectation before him but that he will be destroyed. He *may* escape, God *may* intervene, but man has no right to count on that possibility. To do so would be to tempt God, to put Him to the proof, to insist on spectacular evidence of His power.

The third temptation is the most subtle of all. The Messiah was to win all the realms of the world and all the grandeur of them. Here was an easy way in which it might be done. Let Jesus once fall down and worship the tempter, and his supreme end would be achieved. This again is countered with a reminiscence from Deuteronomy vi. 13, this time in a form which is not exactly either that of the M.T. or that of the LXX, for both have 'fear' instead of 'worship.' To yield would have been to compromise, to take a short cut to the attainment of an ideal. It has frequently happened in history that men of the highest ideals have been led into compromise of this kind, and have felt that a single act of evil might secure them the highest good, and it has been the invariable experience of men that the nobler the ideal, the more terrible has been the resultant disaster. From this moment onwards two courses were set clearly before Jesus. He might adopt the views current among his contemporaries and the methods of force accepted by others of his people who aimed, as they believed, at the reign of God. He might be such a Messiah as Judas Maccabaeus had nearly been, or his own contemporary Judas, or Theudas, or even, perhaps, Barabbas, and have called his nation to arms. On the other hand, he might follow the path trodden by the ideal Servant of God depicted in Isaiah liii., a path which led through suffering, misunder-

standing, and rejection to condemnation and death. The one was the short and easy road, and, with the miraculous powers which Jesus believed himself to possess, would have succeeded—to outward appearance. The other was the slow and difficult course, bringing on himself untold agony, and promising, for the immediate future only, a very small measure of success. As we have seen, this was a temptation which never left Jesus. It was the certainty that there was a way out—but it was not his Father's way—that produced the agony in the garden, and he could say to those who at the end would have defended him, **' Do you think I cannot appeal to my Father to furnish me at this moment with over twelve legions of angels ? '** (xxvi. 53). Yet he stedfastly chose the other way, and it led him in the end to the Cross.

12 **Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he with-**
13 **drew to Galilee ; he left Nazaret and settled at Capharna-**
hum beside the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and
14 **Naphtali—for the fulfilment of what had been said by the prophet Isaiah :**

15 *Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali*
lying to the sea, across the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles !
16 *The people who sat in darkness saw a great light,*
yea light dawned on those who sat in the land and the shadow of death.

Jesus seems to have returned to his home in Nazareth, and waited for some sign that the time had come for him to begin his active work. Such an indication came to him, when he heard that John had been arrested (the story is told in xiv. 3–5). But Nazareth was not the proper place ; it was a small village, and none would have listened to him. He removed, therefore, to one of the largest cities of Galilee, Capernaum. It is characteristic of the evangelist that he sees in this the fulfilment of the words found in Isaiah viii. 23–ix. 1. As in so many other of the ' proof-texts ' cited in Matthew, the language is neither that of the LXX nor (exactly) a rendering of the M.T.,

but seems to be an independent variation of a slightly different Hebrew text. The purpose of the quotation is clear. In a village like Nazareth, whilst the people were by no means cut off from the heathen world, they did not live in such close and intimate contact with it as did the dwellers in Capernaum. But the mission of Jesus is to be world-wide; it begins in Galilee of the Gentiles.

II. iv. 17–25: The Beginning of the Ministry

As in Mark, so here there is no trace of an early Judaean ministry. But this evangelist does not propose to follow his predecessor exactly, and therefore sums up the history of the Galilean ministry in a few sentences, devoting the next twelve chapters to illustrative events which occurred in that period.

From that day Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, 17
the Reign of heaven is near.'

As he was walking along the sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, 18
Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew,
casting a net in the sea—for they were fishermen; so 19
he said to them, 'Come, follow me, and I will make you
fish for men.' And they dropped their nets at once and 20
followed him. Then going on from there he saw two 21
other brothers, James the son of Zebedaeus and his brother
John, mending their nets in the boat beside their father
Zebedaeus. He called them, and they left the boat and 22
their father at once, and went after him.

The narrative of the call of the first disciples is taken, with very slight verbal changes, from Mark. It illustrates the power of Jesus over men. He had been, presumably, in Capernaum for some time (though it must be remembered that this is conjecture) before he summoned Simon and Andrew to follow him, and they may have known him. But they did not know his real nature or purpose; that only came home to them after long association with him. They must have thought of him as another John, giving the same message, and preparing, though by a different method, for

the time that was to come. Yet, such was the authority of his personality, that they **dropped their nets and followed him** as soon as he called them to fish for men. The same authority impelled also the **two other brothers, James the son of Zebedaeus and his brother John**, to follow at his behest. Mark adds that the old father still had hired servants working for him; he would not have his readers think that Jesus would have left an old man destitute of the sons on whose labours he depended for a living.

23 **Then he made a tour through the whole of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Reign, and healing all the sickness and disease of the people.**
24 **The fame of him spread all through the surrounding country, and people brought him all their sick, those who suffered from all manner of disease and pain, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics; he healed them all.**
25 **And he was followed by great crowds from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judaea and from across the Jordan.**

In these three verses the evangelist sums up the Galilean ministry of Jesus. He is not greatly interested in history as a record of events, and adapts phrases from different parts of Mark. Thus Mark i. 39 may be compared with ver. 23; the tour took place after the events which this evangelist records in viii. 14–17. Ver. 24 recalls Mark i. 28 and a summary of the activities of Jesus in Mark vi. 55 (reproduced also by Matthew in its appropriate context). Ver. 25 finds a fairly close parallel (Decapolis is not mentioned, while other districts are included) in Mark iii. 7–8.

This summary of material from several quarters enables us to form a picture of the activities of Jesus at this time. His primary task is **preaching the gospel of the Reign**, but that is not all. He is **followed by great crowds** from all parts of the country, and it is clear that men come, not merely as they came to John, to hear the new message, but also in order to have some of their pressing needs met. **Those who suffered from all manner of disease and pain** were brought to him, and

in the midst of the throng of the anxious and the eager, the suffering patients, the miracle-hunters, the fervid nationalists and the earnest seekers after God, the cry of human pain reached his compassionate spirit, and **he healed them all.**

III. Chaps. v.–vii.: The Sermon on the Mount

These chapters have won universal recognition as the supreme statement of the ethical duties of man. They have been accepted as a statement of the ideal Christian standard of life, and outside the circle of professing Christians they have secured general approval. The truth is that the type of character and conduct depicted in them is one which makes a universal appeal to the human conscience. It does not differ greatly from that which the world's greatest ethical teachers have always set before their hearers, and parallels can often be quoted from the teachings of Confucius, the Buddha, the Stoics, and the Pharisees.

Yet it is worth noting that as it stands the 'Sermon' is addressed, not to the world at large, but to the disciples. **His disciples came up to him and he opened his lips and began to teach them**; that is the key to the whole. The crowds are about him, and, presumably, are free to listen, but his words are not addressed primarily to them. That is characteristic of Jesus; his moral teaching is intended for those who have already consecrated themselves to him. It is a striking fact that we have little or no record of what Jesus used to say to the publicans and sinners whose Friend he was called. He spent his time with them, and seems to have liked them; he could talk with them and enjoy their company, but as far as we know he never preached at them. The sins he denounced were those of the righteous, not those of acknowledged evil-doers, and for the latter he laid down no moral law and upheld no moral standard. The instinct of the evangelical church has been sound. First bring men and women to Christ, get them to accept him and enrol themselves among his disciples, and then it will be possible to teach them to lead his life. Of course it is right, proper, and even necessary to tell people the kind of life and spirit Jesus will demand of

them when they have accepted him, but the due order must be observed in practice. The most dangerous phenomenon in history has been the attempt to apply the Christian ethic without the Christian experience.

Even so, a careful study of the teaching of Jesus shews that the 'Sermon' is not so much a detailed statement of his essential principles as a series of illustrations of the way in which they will manifest themselves in actual life. The principles themselves Jesus could sum up in short sentences such as the passage found in Mark viii. 34–37 (the Law of Self-abnegation) and Mark x. 42–45 (the Law of Service). But the world needs illustrations as well as principles. Even when the average man accepts a doctrine as good and right in itself, he fails often to apply it, because he does not see its bearing on his own life and on that of the society in which he lives. It is for this reason that these chapters have deservedly won their place in men's thought, as an exposition of the Christian morality. The Law of Self-abnegation and the Law of Service between them sum up all that Jesus had to give the world of ethical principle, but men would have been left helpless as to their meaning had there not been some such application of these laws to ordinary life.

The structure of the 'Sermon' is interesting, and affords one of the best illustrations of this evangelist's habit of grouping his material. Some of the sayings are found elsewhere in other connexions, and it is clear that shorter collections were already in existence, and that these have been united into a single whole by the evangelist. Some of the injunctions appear in Luke vi., others in Luke xii. or other contexts, some, again, are not found elsewhere. Many of the sayings can be paralleled from the utterances of the great Jewish Rabbis of the first two centuries A.D., though it takes no long study of the latter to see how much else they included.

1. *The Beatitudes* (v. 1–12)

Four 'Beatitudes' with corresponding 'Woes' are to be found in Luke vi. 20–26. These resemble the first, second,

fourth, and last of those which appear here. In Luke the first and third (corresponding to Matthew's first and fourth) are concerned simply with material conditions, which in Matthew are represented by spiritual qualities. Opinions differ as to the original form; possibly at different times Jesus used both.

v.

So when he saw the crowds, he went up the hill and sat down; 1
his disciples came up to him and he opened his lips and 2
began to teach them. He said:
'Blessed are those who feel poor in spirit! 3
the Realm of heaven is theirs.
Blessed are the mourners! 4
they will be consoled.
Blessed are *the humble!* 5
they *will inherit the earth.*
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for goodness! 6
they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful! 7
they will find mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart! 8
they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers! 9
they will be ranked sons of God.
Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the 10
sake of goodness!
the Realm of heaven is theirs.
Blessed are you when men denounce you and persecute you 11
and utter all manner of evil against you for my sake;
rejoice and exult in it, for your reward is rich in heaven; 12
that is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

Familiarity with the phraseology of Jesus is apt to blind us to the force of his language. Blessed represents a Hebrew or Aramaic phrase which is of the nature of an exclamation or an interjection—'O the blessedness, the happiness of those who . . .!', 'How fortunate are they who . . .!' Jesus is not offering rewards; he is stating facts. Sometimes the fact is in the present, sometimes it is an event in

the future, more probably in this gospel in the life after death. But even though its manifestation be postponed to another stage of existence, it is nevertheless a fact, and Jesus sees and states it. His language is that of one who witnesses a great triumph or a striking success, and offers felicitations. We have presented to us features of character, conduct, or experience on which Jesus *congratulates* men because of the results which accrue to them. Each ' blessing ' is therefore accompanied by the reason for which it is pronounced, and sometimes, though not always, the whole statement appears to be a paradox.

So the first ' blessing ' contrasts men who **feel poor in spirit** with the **Realm** which they are to receive. No doubt there is an eschatological element in the thought of the evangelist —whether this was present to the mind of Jesus himself is another matter—and he thinks of the **Realm of heaven** as the bliss which is not to be secured in this age. Such an interpretation of Jesus and of his language is characteristic of this gospel, but we may suspect that Jesus went deeper and saw the sharp contrast between beggary and kingship. The picture is that of a man who is conscious of having nothing and of being nothing, who has achieved to the full what Jesus meant by ' self-denial.' This is just the man who will win the highest position—kingship—in the sight of God.

In the blessing on the **mourners** the paradox is obvious. No human friend would enter the house of bereavement with congratulations, yet this is exactly what the words of Jesus suggest. There is an experience that can only be attained through loss—the experience of being **consoled.** This is not a mere deadening of grief ; it is rather the passage from an overwhelming sense of sorrow to an overwhelming sense of divine sympathy and love. This can only be attained through that almost universal experience, the loss of a loved friend ; and in its revelation of the love of God it forms the only road to a happiness and a joy which more than counterbalance the weight of pain. There can be no full appreciation of such joy except by those who have known its opposite, and it is immeasurably better to have suffered and been **consoled**

than never to have known distress at all. In life, as in music, the most perfect form of peace is that which is brought by the resolved discord. For the comfort of God is not the use of conventional formulae of consolation; it is the perfect sympathy of one who has sounded the uttermost depths of pain. There is a mystery in sorrow, but God shares the sorrow, and we may be sure that He holds the key to the mystery.

In the third ' blessing,' which does not appear in Luke, we have a certain resemblance to the first, the phrasing being apparently based on Psalm xxxvii. 11. The difference between the **poor** and the **humble** in Hebrew and Aramaic is very slight, and the two words are often confused. But there is no confusion here, for a different result of the two qualities is stated, in that while **those who feel poor in spirit** will find that **the Realm of heaven is theirs**, those counted as the **humble** are to **inherit the earth.** The **poor in spirit** are those who are conscious of their own insignificance, the **humble** are those whose insignificance is assumed by those about them. To **inherit** is to take possession of, especially to expel or survive a previous possessor. Now, to the ordinary mind, it is the aggressive, the self-confident, the self-asserting, the self-advertising, who win their way in the world and gain the earth for themselves. The **humble** man is in all respects the exact opposite of this, and it is he who, as Jesus sees, will ultimately **inherit the earth.** The capacity for submissive endurance will in the long run prevail over dominant aggressiveness. Once more Jesus has expressed a deep truth in an apparent paradox.

In the fourth ' blessing,' again, this evangelist refers to a spiritual attitude, while Luke deals with an earthly condition. **Hunger and thirst** provide a metaphor which is more telling to the Oriental than it is to us. Conditions of life are harder and water is scarcer in the life of the peasant class to which Jesus and his disciples belonged than to any modern Europeans. The context suggests that **goodness** implies some special virtue, and that Jesus is insisting on fairness and justice, though probably not in the forensic sense in

which the term is often used. To be fair is one of the most difficult of achievements, and only those who have a real passion for justice, who feel that their very souls will perish without it, have any real chance of attaining it. But, given that passion, they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, again, is a saying which goes deep into the spiritual life. **Mercy** is one of those concepts which the New Testament inherited from the Old. Such sayings as **Go and learn the meaning of this word,** *I care for mercy not for sacrifice* (Matthew ix. 13) shew that it was with Jesus a favourite element in the higher ethic. This goes back to Hosea, and it is to the Hebrew word, coming into the language of Jesus through Aramaic, that we must turn for an interpretation. The **merciful** man is he who is distinguished by the quality of *hesed* (Aramaic *hisda*), one of the most difficult words to translate, so rich is its content of meaning. Even 'love,' though it is nearer than any other English word, hardly fills its content, for 'love' does not necessarily imply the intellectual factor which is involved in the Hebrew word. *Hesed* is the perfection of that mystical relation of one personality to another which is the highest of all possible grades of friendship. It means a sympathetic appreciation of other persons, the power, not merely to concentrate blindly on them, but to feel deliberately with them, to see life from their point of view. It may be the attitude of the superior to the inferior or of the inferior to the superior or of equals to one another. It is used of God's treatment of man and of man's treatment of God, and if we render the word by 'love,' we must remember that it implies that highest form of love which includes not merely emotion but also intelligent sympathy. There is no paradox in this 'blessing.' That the loving soul should be loved is almost a truism; the hearts of God and man alike are open to him whose heart is open to them.

The sixth 'blessing' is concerned with the **pure in heart.** Here, again, the language of Jesus has a history behind it. The conception of **purity** is originally ceremonial, and implies freedom from anything which might be obnoxious to the

deity who is being approached. In the higher forms of religion, to which Judaism, at any rate in its later stages, belongs, this is transferred from purely material cleanliness to a moral freedom from contamination. This is implied in the definition of the persons concerned as the **pure in heart**, a phrase which probably goes back to Psalm xxiv. 3 f. The ground on which the ' congratulation ' of Jesus rests is that this attitude and character of mind enables men to **see God.** This is obviously an essential element in the supreme ideal to which religion can aspire. For in the nature of religion the great aim must be the establishment and maintenance of right relations between the worshipper and the object or objects of his worship. In the highest forms of human faith this will imply that direct and immediate knowledge of God which may be called **seeing** Him. Here, again, there is no paradox. Purity of heart means a concentration of the whole personality on God, the exclusion of everything else, a spiritual state which in English literature is typified by Tennyson's Galahad. It appears later as the **generous Eye.** It is as though there were only one window to the soul, serving alike for vision and for illumination. If that through which man looks on God and the world be clouded or defiled, if the outlook be stained or fogged, then the entering rays will suffer the same deterioration. It is only as the spiritual window is kept clean that a distinct vision of God can be won.

The seventh ' blessing ' is interesting especially because those whom Jesus congratulates are to be **ranked sons of God.** The Semitic idiom lying behind this phrase implies more than the kind of relationship which is involved in the universal Fatherhood of God. It rather expresses identity in nature and character. The Hebrew language is poor in adjectives (there is not a single adjective, for instance, in the 23rd Psalm) and has to meet the need in other ways. So the phrase ' son ' followed by another noun is often equivalent to a predicative adjective. **Sons of God,** then, are those who manifest the God-life, do as God does, perform God's task in the world. This task is the creation of **peace,** which means in Semitic phraseology the promotion of general prosperity.

Jesus, however, may have used the term in that more restricted sense which it has to the modern ear, for the absence of war was the primary condition of all kinds of prosperity in the ancient world. This, then, is the only 'congratulation' offered to men on the ground of their direct activity among their fellows; the rest deal with character and with attitudes of soul. This is concerned with the dealings of a man with his fellows, and suggests that the aim of God and of the God-like man is the maintenance of right relations between men. The ideal of God for human society is a spiritual condition in which jealousy, rivalry, and hostility have disappeared, and a universal harmony prevails. He who is most worthy of congratulation for his true success in this difficult and complicated world of men and women is he who most perfectly succeeds in producing and upholding this harmony.

Formally there are two more 'blessings,' though it has been generally recognized that for practical purposes they are one and the same, the first being a general statement of the truth, and the second its particular application to the disciples of Jesus. The latter alone is represented in the Lucan form. Again the element of paradox is strongly marked; those who are **persecuted**—'hunted down'—are to experience a complete reversal of position and to rise to the very **Realm of heaven**—the Kingship of God. The reader's mind goes back at once to the first of the world's great religious persecutions, the attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to root out the Jewish faith and the Jewish sense of nationality. In those days too many of the faithful had been **forlorn, oppressed, ill-treated . . . wanderers in the desert and among the hills, in caves and gullies** (Hebrews xi. 37 f.). And Jesus sees that it is just these hunted fugitives who will be—who are—the real lords and owners in the **Realm of heaven.**

The particular application of this law to the disciples differs verbally in the two gospels, and Matthew's is undeniably the less vigorous and picturesque of the two. It is possible that the evangelists had different versions of the same Aramaic original before them, or even that there were differences in detail between the fundamental texts. But

there is no difference in the principle involved. In order to compensate for and counterbalance the sufferings they will have to endure in this life, there will be awaiting them a rich harvest in the next. And the evidence for this fact (this is the only instance in which Jesus offers evidence) is that the **prophets,** who more certainly than any others deserved and obtained a **reward in heaven,** received exactly the same treatment that may befall the disciples.

2. *The Function of the Disciples in the World* (v. 13–16)

The last ' blessing ' leads naturally up to the position of the immediate hearers of Jesus, and so forms an introduction to the main body of the ' Sermon.' The moral character which is to be described has a purpose. The Christian ethic is not a selfish thing, but must be adopted for the sake of the world in general. Its aim is not to acquire merit, but to distribute blessing.

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes insipid, 13
what can make it salt again? After that it is fit for
nothing, fit only to be thrown outside and trodden by the
feet of men.
You are the light of the world. A town on the top of a hill 14
cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp to put it 15
under a bowl; they put it on a stand and it shines for all
in the house. So your light is to shine before men, that 16
they may see the good you do and glorify your Father in
heaven.

These verses contain two metaphors, the first of which is also found in Rabbinic teaching—possibly borrowed from Christian sources. The disciples are the **salt of the earth** and the **light of the world.** Salt and light are both indispensable; both are irreplaceable; each has its own features. The saying thus exalts the body of the disciples to a unique position. But it also contains a warning. **If the salt becomes insipid, it is fit only to be thrown outside and trodden by the feet of men.** If the Christian loses his distinctive quality, and ceases to

represent the character and spirit of Christ in the world, he is no use for any other purpose, and might as well cease to be at once. Like salt, he has one and only one efficient element in his composition, and if he fails to retain that, for him all is gone.

The second metaphor is that of the light. What a lamp is to a house—the one-roomed cottage of the Oriental peasant's home—that the Christian is to the world. But the stress is laid, not so much on the revealing power of the lamp, as on its visibility. The disciples will be conspicuous people, wherever they are and whatever they are doing, as conspicuous as a town on the top of a hill, or a lamp on a stand. It is strange to think that Jesus was addressing a handful of Galilean peasants! Yet even they must be careful how their light burns, for they cannot help its burning. Men will recognize the light as that which comes from God, and will judge God accordingly. If their life is what it should be, it is the good they do that will attract attention, and men, realizing the source of that goodness, will glorify their Father in heaven. In this world the honour, almost the reputation, of God is in the hands of His children.

3. *The New Ethic* (v. 17–vi. 18)

It now becomes necessary to know what the salt and light are really like. The new teaching is first contrasted with the standards which have been already accepted, those of the Mosaic Law and of the Pharisaic morality. Only when it is seen beside these principles can its real value and purpose be appreciated. The passage falls into three sections: (*a*) general introduction, intimating the place of the new Law in relation to the old, (*b*) contrast with the old Law, (*c*) contrast with accepted ideals.

17 Do not imagine I have come to destroy the Law or the prophets;
18 I have not come to destroy but to fulfil. (I tell you truly, till heaven and earth pass away not an iota, not a comma, will pass from the Law until it is all in force. Therefore

whoever relaxes a single one of these commands, were it even one of the least, and teaches men so, he will be ranked least in the Realm of heaven; but whoever obeys them and teaches them, he will be ranked great in the Realm of heaven.) For I tell you, unless your goodness excels that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the Realm of heaven. 19 20

A superficial student of the teaching of Jesus might assume that he had **come to destroy the Law.** For instance, in his teaching on the Sabbath, he seems definitely to abrogate one of the Ten Commandments. In any case the Law could never be the same thing to his followers that it had been to his predecessors. But it does not follow that his purpose was actual destruction, though it is clear that he consciously inaugurated a new regime which should largely supersede it, and bring its dominance to an end. There are two ways of doing this. One is to say, 'It was all wrong, and must be completely abolished'; the other is to say, 'It was right as far as it went, and for its immediate purpose, but it was imperfect and temporary.' This is the attitude of Jesus. He **did not come to destroy, but to fulfil,** to make complete, to perfect, to emend, to give the temporary thing, with its numerous occasional details, an eternal validity. The Law had been an interim expedient, the best that could be devised until the fullness of time, for the securing of certain ends. But under the regime of Jesus these ends can be still better secured, and the Law, though superseded as the final authority, will be **fulfilled,** completed, absorbed into a higher rule of life.

Vers. 18, 19, seem to be parenthetic. Ver. 18 is found in a somewhat similar, though far from identical, context, in Luke xvi. 17, and ver. 19 has the appearance of being a commentary upon it. In the parallel passage the phrase **until it is all in force** does not appear, and may have been added in explanation. It is not easy to determine the precise significance of the clause. It literally means 'until all comes into being,' and must be a rendering of an Aramaic phrase which meant that and nothing else. But it does not follow

that the subject is necessarily the Law. In respect to a prophecy the expression might imply that the prophet's words had or would come true, but this can hardly be the sense when it is applied to **the Law.** It has been suggested that the reference is to the life and work of Jesus himself; when all this is complete, the utility of the Law will have ceased. Till then, however, **not an iota, not a comma,** neither the smallest letter nor the least significant sign, can be disregarded. Jesus emphasizes his point with the word **truly.** His use of it is entirely novel. It was commonly employed as the solemn answer to a question, or in the acceptance of a statement or of a commission. It has the force of an oath, whilst it does not involve the objectionable features of an oath. This seems to be the reason why Jesus made such free use of it, for it gave the needed strength to his statements. Ver. 19 introduces distinctions both in the validity and in the stringency of various items of the Law, and in the rewards that are reserved for the righteous. Such differences in the importance of commandments were generally recognized in the days of Jesus (cf. the scribe's question in Matthew xxii. 35), and he may have adopted them. The **relaxing** of the Law involves a familiar figure, which compares the Law to a chain. The ordinary rabbinic word for 'forbidden' is one which literally means 'bound,' and that which is permitted is 'free.' Even the least slackening of the bond of obligation will react on its perpetrator.

The evangelist has set before himself the purpose of writing an apologetic for Jewish readers. Their enthusiasm was naturally concentrated on the Law for which their fathers had suffered, and for which they themselves stood against the whole world. It was therefore necessary to shew (as, in his own way, Paul had to shew) that though the Law was superseded, it was not abolished, and that it held its place as an indispensable element in the evolution of the divine plan for human religion which reached its climax in the Cross of Jesus.

With ver. 20 we reach the essential summary of the whole Sermon, the text, as it were, from which it was preached.

It follows naturally on ver. 17, and may well have preceded it immediately as the words first fell from the lips of Jesus. It is difficult for us to realize the amazing paradox which the words involve. **The Pharisees** as a sect were the descendants of the old Hasidaeans, who had come into existence in the second century B.C., when the influence of Greek paganism was first making itself felt in the Jewish community. These ' white lambs of the sheep,' as the Ethiopic book of Enoch calls them, were distinguished, even among the faithful Jews, for the purity of their lives and for their simple and whole-hearted devotion to the Law. In the early days of the Maccabaean revolt they lent all their support to the Jewish arms, but when the cause of religious, as distinct from civil, liberty was won, they retired, and later were found in actual opposition to the Hasmonaeans. But they maintained their high standard of reverence for the Law, and gave to it a wealth of loving scholarship, whose result is to be seen to-day in the Mishnah, the ' hedge ' that they built about the Law. Whilst many of their regulations seem to us to be excessively strict and to pay too much attention to minor points of detail, in the earlier days of the movement this scrupulousness was aroused by a noble and genuine belief in the divine origin of the Law and by the determination to do all that human intelligence could devise and human energy effect to see that the will of God was done. **The scribes** were the scholars of the party, and gave themselves to the understanding and interpretation of the Law. In the eyes of their own generation the two classes had attained the very summit of that **goodness** which lay in keeping the Law, and it was the occupation of a lifetime to reach and to maintain their standards. Yet Jesus tells his disciples that such goodness is insufficient, and that in the new community **goodness** must **excel that of the scribes and Pharisees.** It is as if in some athletic contest an amateur, a novice, were pitted against the professional champion, and told that the least he must do is to surpass this antagonist. Jesus' disciples must be more faithful than absolute fidelity, purer than spotless purity, more perfect than absolute perfection. Otherwise there is no entry for them **into the Realm**

of heaven. The meaning of this astounding dictum is illustrated by a series of practical examples. We see first:

THE NEW ETHIC CONTRASTED WITH THE OLD LAW (v. 21–48)

Six illustrations are given, each introduced with a reference to the terms of the Mosaic Law—**You have heard how the men of old were told** or some phrase of similar import. Then follows the statement of the new conditions that Jesus himself lays down, and in each it is seen that the demands of Jesus go deeper than mere conduct. Not what a man does, but what he is, defines his position for Jesus, and what he is may come out in small things as well as in great.

21 You have heard how the men of old were told, "*Murder not:*
whoever murders must come up for sentence,
22 whoever maligns his brother must come before the Sanhedrin,
whoever curses his brother must go to the fire of Gehenna."

But I tell you, whoever is angry with his brother [without
23 cause] will be sentenced by God. So if you remember,
even when offering your gift at the altar, that your brother
24 has any grievance against you, leave your gift at the very
altar and go away; first be reconciled to your brother,
then come back and offer your gift.
25 Be quick and make terms with your opponent, so long as
you and he are on the way to court, in case he hands you
over to the judge, and the judge to the jailer, and you are
26 thrown into prison; truly I tell you, you will never get
out till you pay the last halfpenny of your debt.

The first illustration is taken from the prohibition of **murder.** The act of killing is less serious than the feeling and intention that have led up to it. Even the language of bad temper serves to indicate a condition of soul which is more dangerous to the angry man himself than to the object of his abuse. Much research and ingenuity have been spent in shewing that the word for **curses** (literally 'says, Thou fool') is particularly objectionable, but this is to misunderstand the

passage. The point is that the word, so far from being a 'bad' one, is the lightest term of abuse that can be used. It is not necessary to transpose the clauses; as they stand in the ordinary Bible the words of Jesus emphasize the double antithesis:

Whoever murders must come up for sentence,
But I tell you, whoever is angry with his brother will be sentenced by God;
Whoever maligns his brother must come before the Sanhedrin,
(But I tell you) **whoever curses his brother must go to the fire of Gehenna.** The words do not matter; they are only expressions of a state of mind, and the mildest phrase, if used in a fit of rage, is quite as severely judged as the strongest. Action and speech are approved or condemned solely because they reveal character. Strangely enough, Jesus does not emphasize the effect on the object of anger, though that may be terrible indeed; what he does stress is the danger to the man himself. That is, after all, the best way of securing the aim of the old Law. A man will not **murder** without a motive, and the spirit that excludes hatred and anger will not only be justified in itself, but will make murder impossible.

This leads up to an illustration of the profound importance of right human relationships. It would generally be agreed that the performance of some religious act should take precedence of other demands. But even the most holy of all religious acts, **offering a gift at the altar,** must take second place. Though all preliminaries be performed, and the knife be at the victim's very throat, if a man suddenly **remember that** his **brother has** a **grievance against** him, the completion of the sacrifice must be postponed till the personal claim is satisfied. A few seconds more, and the offering would have been made, but the demand for reconciliation will not wait those seconds. It would be difficult to find any stronger terms in which to emphasize the paramount claims of the humaner elements in life.

Vers. 25, 26 have received various interpretations. To some expositors they seem to be a warning of the doom that awaits Israel if she will not come to terms with her

God. To others they would imply an ordinary prudential precept, of a kind which is occasionally ascribed to Jesus. In any case it is probable that they did not originally belong to their present context. If they did, then they must be taken as an illustration of the inexorable fate that awaits the man who will not **make terms with an opponent,** who insists on keeping up a quarrel. As in the last case, it is the wrongdoer and not the injured party who is addressed by Jesus, and is warned and instructed by him.

27 **You have heard how it used to be said,** *Do not commit adultery.*
28 **But I tell you, any one who even looks with lust at a woman has committed adultery with her already in his heart.**
29 **If your right eye is a hindrance to you,**
pluck it out and throw it away :
better for you to lose one of your members
than to have all your body thrown into Gehenna.
30 **And if your right hand is a hindrance to you,**
cut it off and throw it away :
better for you to lose one of your members
than to have all your body thrown into Gehenna.

As in the last instance, the new law prohibiting **adultery** looks beyond the mere action—which was all that the scribe contemplated—to the attitude and motive. The sin must be committed in the mind before it can be committed in action, and to Jesus the man is guilty if he has done the deed in thought, whether that thought has been translated into action or not.

The two verses which follow may have originated in a different context, though the connecting link—that danger that may come through sight—is fairly clear. But the reference to the **hand,** in spite of rabbinic parallels which have been cited, is hardly suited to the immediate context. The meaning is clear. A man with an all-important purpose may find things in himself, as valuable as **the eye** or **the hand,** which prove to be **hindrances**—things over which he trips and falls. It is better for him to **pluck out** or **cut off**

and throw away such a thing, however intimately it may cling to the owner, just as a lizard will sacrifice its tail or a lobster its claw if they are sources of danger. Jesus seems to adopt the current view of a bodily resurrection and of Gehenna, but his reference is wider. A physical loss, though it were to last for ever, would be preferable to spiritual injury. The saying is repeated (slightly modified) in xviii. 8–9.

It used to be said, *Whoever divorces his wife must give her a* 31
divorce-certificate. **But I tell you, anyone who divorces** 32
his wife for any reason except unchastity makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

The subject of **divorce** is naturally suggested by that last section. Under the old view of marriage the wife was a part of the material property of her husband, and could be discarded almost at pleasure. If she were dismissed, provided she were properly certified as a divorced woman, she could not be charged with adultery, whatever she did. Adultery was a crime against property, and a divorced woman was no man's property. There were restrictions in contemporary Judaism on the husband's right of divorce, suggested by Deuteronomy xxiv. 1, and all rabbis would admit **unchastity** as a valid ground. But even this justification is omitted in Luke xvi. 18, and may have been inserted by the evangelist as an interpretation of the words of Jesus. A similar saying is found in xix. 9, and there also we may doubt whether Jesus really limited the application of his law. To him no legal formula or judicial act could affect what was fundamentally a spiritual relation. Marriage is not a merely physical association, it is a heart union; husband and wife—where the marriage is a real one—become one flesh because they are in a profound sense one soul. If adultery is the desecration of the deepest and holiest element in the physical life of man, no mere scrap of paper can make the slightest difference to it.

Once again, you have heard how the men of old were told, 33
"You must not forswear yourself **but** *discharge your vows*

34 *to the Lord.*" But I tell you, you must not swear any
oath,
neither by *heaven,*
for it is the throne of God,
35 nor by *earth,*
for it *is the footstool of his feet,*
Nor by Jerusalem,
for it *is the city of the great King ;*
36 nor shall you swear by your head,
for you cannot make a single hair white or black.
37 Let what you say be simply " yes " or " no " ;
whatever exceeds that springs from evil.

No commandment in the Decalogue has been more misused than ' Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.' It was not a prohibition of profanity but of perjury, as Jesus' paraphrase **You must not forswear yourself** shews. And his treatment of the subject again illustrates his power of going to the very heart of a matter. The condemnation of perjury is a relic of the old form of religion, in which it was held that God's interest in morality was limited, if it existed at all. There were certain crimes only which affected Him, and those always took the form of personal neglect or affront, of an offence to His dignity or to His prejudices. But His participation might be secured in affairs to which He would otherwise have been indifferent, by the use of some formula which introduced Him into the matter, and made it a question of His personal honour. He would not punish an ordinary lie or failure to keep a promise—that concerned two men, and had nothing to do with Him. But if His name were used in a transaction, then His dignity and honour were at stake ; He had been expressly brought in, and falsehood or default would be a personal insult to Him. But men could not look for His interference unless He were thus deliberately involved by a formal appeal to Him. The truth which Jesus states is the fulfilment of the prophetic doctrine from the days of Amos downwards. God is interested in all moral questions. It is unnecessary to import Him artificially into

human life, for man cannot keep Him out of it. It is folly to hope that escape from the consequences of perjury may be found by swearing an **oath by heaven . . .** or **by Jerusalem . . .** or **by** one's **head.** God made all these things, and He is involved in them ; to introduce them is to introduce Him. He is just as fully implicated by one who says **simply " yes " or " no,"** as by any oaths, and **whatever exceeds that springs from evil,** for it shews that the speaker is not normally conscious of God's interest in his words and acts.

You have heard the saying, *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.* 38

But I tell you, you are not to resist an injury : 39

whoever strikes you on the right cheek,
turn the other to him as well ;
whoever wants to sue you for your shirt, 40
let him have your coat as well ;
whoever forces you to go one mile, 41
go two miles with him ;
give to the man who begs from you, and turn not away 42
from him who wants to borrow.

The *lex talionis* is one of the normal, elementary principles of justice in man's thinking, and is found under the old dispensation in Exodus xxi. 23–25, Leviticus xxiv. 20, and Deuteronomy xix. 21. A comparison of this and the next passage with Luke vi. 27–36 suggests that the evangelist has taken an original discourse of Jesus, and fitted it into his scheme of contrasts. Jesus uses strong language, which would be understood as such by his hearers, and accepted as laying down principles which from some points of view did not go as far as the actual words and from others went further. The man who, when struck **on the right cheek,** can **turn the other to** the striker **as well,** who, when sued for his **shirt,** lets his opponent take his **coat as well,** or goes **two miles with** the military force that has commandeered him **to go one mile,** has probably done more than Jesus requires. At the same time, if he stops there, and becomes aggressive, or niggardly,

or sullen, he has not really begun to fulfil his demand. What Jesus asks is the peaceful, generous, willing spirit, that does not haggle about details, but has its roots in complete self-forgetfulness. These sentences form the best of all commentaries on the third beatitude.

43 You have heard the saying, "*You must love your neighbour*
44 and hate your enemy." But I tell you, love your enemies
45 and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be
sons of your Father in heaven :
he makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, and
sends rain on the just and the unjust.
46 For if you love only those who love you, what reward
do you get for that ?
do not the very taxgatherers do as much ?
47 and if you only salute your friends, what is special
about that ?
do not the very pagans do as much ?
48 *You must be perfect* as your heavenly Father is perfect.

In so far as any religion carries with it ethical implications, these are dependent on the character which is ascribed to the object of worship. This was recognized from the days of Amos onwards, and thoughtful men realized that a God who is Himself morally perfect must demand first and foremost moral perfection from His worshippers. Ver. 48, suggesting Leviticus xix. 2 and Deuteronomy xviii. 13, is a summary of all that was best in Judaism, in that it bases the ethical teaching of that faith on the nature of the God who had revealed Himself to Israel. This principle is applied to a common element in human relations, as a corrective to the tendency to administer too rigidly a law of vindictive and arbitrary retribution. God has no favourites. **He makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.** God loves people no more because they are good, no less because they are wicked. A bad man and a good man, out together in a thunderstorm, have an equal chance of being struck by lightning. Any 'reward'

that goodness may receive is the natural outcome of that goodness; any 'punishment' that falls on the sinner is the inevitable result of his sin—his sin finds him out. The one rewards himself, the other punishes himself; God loves both equally, and makes His laws apply to both alike. It was fitting that this truth should be emphasized by Jesus, of whom it was to be said, 'God commendeth His own love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'

Jesus therefore demands that his disciples shall carry this principle into practice in their own lives. Mere observance of a *lex talionis* may be enough for tax-gatherers and pagans, but it is not enough for the Christian. He who is kind and courteous to his friends alone has not begun to aim at the standard which Jesus sets up. The words rendered **what is there special about that?** recall the **excels** of ver. 20; the Greek root is the same in both verses. The task set before the disciples has been that of surpassing the experts, defeating the professional champions. If men merely **love those who love** them, and **salute** their **friends**, they are still on the level of novices. They have, in fact, not yet entered into the competition. Instead of attaining to a higher class in **goodness** than the **scribes and Pharisees** who gave their whole lives to the subject, they have not yet risen above the **tax-collector** and the **pagan** who know little about goodness, and perhaps care less. It is not thus that men enter the **Realm of heaven.**

THE NEW PIETY CONTRASTED WITH THE OLD (vi. 1–18)

vi.

Take care not to practise your charity before men in order 1
to be noticed; otherwise you get no reward from your
Father in heaven. No,
When you give alms, 2
make no flourish of trumpets like the hypocrites in the
synagogues and the streets,
so as to win applause from men;
I tell you truly, they do get their reward.

3 **When you give alms,**
do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,
4 **so as to keep your alms secret;**
then your Father who sees what is secret will reward you openly.

The Sermon now passes to the contrast between the new religious practice and the old. The whole of this section may be regarded as a commentary on vi. 1, **Take care not to practise your charity before men in order to be noticed; otherwise you get no reward from your Father in heaven.** The three examples given emphasize the essential difference between the motives which actuate different men in the performance of their duties. The word rendered **charity** seems to be used in a rather wide sense. There is no doubt that the Aramaic word which Jesus employed can have this meaning, but its application goes far beyond charity in any sense of the term. It does not here refer to man's treatment of his fellows, for though that is involved in one of the illustrations—that of almsgiving—it is not the aspect of the matter that is stressed. There are certain actions which all men suppose will help to secure right relations between man and God, to 'put them in the right' with Him. From early childhood Jesus had seen such acts performed, and, we may be sure, had performed them himself. But he had observed that men performed these in different ways and from different motives, and that these ways and motives indicated entirely different purposes. On the one hand he saw men bestowing charity, praying, and fasting in such a fashion that others might see them and so recognize and applaud their goodness. The object of their action was **to be noticed**, to say to the world in effect, 'You see how good I am.' Over against this was Jesus' own point of view. To him it was a matter of absolute indifference as to whether men saw and approved or not; what he sought was the approval and the fellowship of his Father. And this is what he commends to his disciples.

Jesus understood human nature. His own thinking was

clear; he knew no compromise. To him there were no 'border-line cases,' everyone fell directly into one category or the other, good or bad. But he knew the danger that awaits the rest of us with our muddy habits of thought and our woolly minds. He knew that our motives are usually mixed, and that while we genuinely desire to do service to God, we are also gratified by the thought of human recognition. Probably there will always be an attraction in publicity, and it is natural for us to like seeing our own names in print. Even when this form of hypocrisy has been overcome, there still remains the more subtle temptation to live for the approval of those whom a man loves. But, in so far as he yields, he is not living a real life at all. He is an actor, a hypocrite, who is playing an imaginary part which he has sketched for himself. It does not matter whether the part corresponds with his true character or not. He may be a good man playing the part of a hero or he may be in himself a thorough scoundrel. It is all one, for it is a part that he is playing, and there is a very deep humour in the conception of the crier proclaiming his function and his skill to the world, and calling attention to the fact that he is to give a penny to a beggar. And such is the complexity of the human mind that none can be sure that he is not tainted with this desire for publicity unless he take the most elaborate precautions. He must not let his left hand know what his right hand is doing, so as to keep his alms secret. This is the hyperbole of emphasis, and is characteristic of the language of Jesus. It serves to bring out in clear light the conclusion of the whole matter: if a man can really rid himself of the desire for human applause, then his Father who sees what is secret will reward him.

Also, when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, 5
for they like to stand and pray in the synagogues and
at the street-corners,
so as to be seen by men;
I tell you truly, they do get their reward.
When you pray, 6
go into your room and shut the door,

pray to your Father who is in secret,
and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you.

7 Do not pray by idle rote like pagans,
for they suppose they will be heard the more they say;
8 you must not copy them;
your Father knows your needs before you ask him.

The second illustration is drawn from prayer, and the essential lesson is the same. You may get from prayer, says Jesus, exactly what you seek. If your aim is **to be seen by men**, then you will be **seen by men**. That is the **reward** you desire, it is the **reward** you receive, and you are paid in full—that is the thought involved in the word rendered **get**. But if you want communion with **your Father**, take elaborate precautions to pray **in secret, and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you**. We shall not greatly err if we see in these two verses a window through which we may catch a glimpse of the inner life of Jesus himself. He knew what it was to seek and to experience a *tête-à-tête* with his Father, and he knew the conditions which made for success. In the language he uses there is a suggestion of Isaiah xxvi. 20, where the inner chamber, the **room**, is recommended as a refuge 'till the storm be past.' Jesus found prayer such a refuge, and out of the midst of the daily commercial and political life of Galilee had been able to find peace and repose in the secret place of communion. Jesus does not specify the **reward**, or tell his disciples that they will win what they ask. The purpose of true prayer goes far deeper than petition, and summarizes the whole of the experience of mystical communion with God.

Vers. 7 and 8 do not belong to the main line of the thought of this passage, and have been introduced because they deal with prayer. The injunction **Do not pray by idle rote** is a little obscure, but it certainly means a voluble utterance which has not the force of personality behind it. The theory of the effective validity of words in themselves is widely spread, and lies at the root of a large part of the world's magical

practices. A formula is a living thing which, once uttered, becomes efficient and accomplishes its purpose whether that be the conscious will of the speaker or not. So **pagans suppose they will be heard the more they say**; the oftener such formulae are recited, the greater becomes the force behind them. Hence prayer may degenerate into magic only too easily.

There is no need to tell God what we want; **your Father knows your needs before you ask him.** Nevertheless, any opening of the heart to Him will shew Him what lies in it. It is, therefore, natural and legitimate to ask for things of whose need we are conscious; to keep them back would be to erect a barrier between ourselves and God. The best known of the prayers of Jesus himself is the outpouring of his whole heart at Gethsemane, and even as he utters the words he knows that his request cannot be granted. There can, therefore, be nothing out of place in the presentation of human desire before God, and this is fully brought out in the model prayer which is appended to these verses.

Let this be how you pray: 9
"our Father in heaven,
thy name be revered,
thy Reign begin, 10
thy will be done
on earth as in heaven!
give us to-day our bread for the morrow, 11
and forgive us our debts 12
as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors,
and lead us not into temptation 13
but deliver us from evil."
For if you forgive men their trespasses, 14
then your heavenly Father will forgive you;
but if you do not forgive men, 15
your Father will not forgive your trespasses either.

It is clear that this prayer did not originally stand in the place it now occupies in this gospel. In Luke it is given as a response to the disciples' request for instruction in prayer, and the form is rather shorter. It has been suggested that

what we have here is the original form. It certainly has a true balance of clauses, and in Aramaic must have been a regularly rhythmical poem. But Luke is not prone to abbreviate his material, and it seems more likely that it was very early expanded into a poem for liturgical use. Comparison between the two forms will shew at once that the extra clauses in this gospel are parallels to and explanations of phrases which are common to both.

In accordance with Jewish tradition the prayer begins with an ascription of praise. The keynote is struck in the first word, **Father,** a common form of address in Jewish prayers. In this gospel the word is defined by the addition of the words **in heaven,** again a Jewish invocation.

The next clause means rather more than is suggested by **thy name be revered.** It is literally ' Thy name be made holy,' and recalls (by way of contrast) the phrase used by Amos (ii. 7), ' to profane my holy name.' In the prophet's day loathsome iniquities were perpetrated at the sanctuary in honour of the God of Israel, and this gave to Him the reputation of being as foul morally as the base deities of surrounding nations. Israel's worship should have made Him appear morally pure ; in practice it had the reverse effect, men claiming His sanction and ordinance for their abominations. What the petition implies is, ' Be Thou recognized throughout the world as the supremely holy God.'

Thy Reign begin had, doubtless, to the disciples an eschatological flavour. Men in their day were unable to think of God's formal assumption of the sovereignty of the world apart from a violent and miraculous interference of God in the world. This is an element in the language and thought of the time from which the essential truth needs to be isolated, and as the consummation of the **Reign** is the longer postponed, men's thoughts turn towards other expressions of the same truth. Its essence is contained in the words **thy will be done on earth as in heaven!** To the Oriental mind sovereignty is always manifested in irresponsible power ; the monarch speaks his will and the rest can but obey. The phrase, then, simply explains the previous words, and whether the **Reign** of God

be introduced by the rending of the heavens and the bursting of the earth, or whether it be slowly evolved by a process of moral and spiritual illumination in mankind, its nature is the same—the supreme dominance of the will of God.

From this the prayer proceeds to the immediate necessities of man, both physical and spiritual. The circle in which Jesus and his disciples had always lived was one in which employment was uncertain and actual living precarious. **Bread for the morrow** is a problem of ever-present urgency, and the natural thing is for a man in communion with his Father to mention this as a pressing need. The phrase **for the morrow** is rather a curious one, and has been the subject of some discussion, many preferring to render ' daily.' Possibly there were two forms of the prayer : one for use in the morning, the other intended for the evening.

In ver. 12 the prayer turns to a spiritual need as pressing as the physical demand for food. The conception of sin as **debt** is familiar from rabbinic writings, and the terms would readily be understood by Jesus' hearers. So important is this matter that further comment is added in vers. 14, 15, when the prayer is ended. For man can ask forgiveness for his own **debts** only if he has **forgiven** his **debtors.** This is explained in a saying taken from its original setting in Mark xi. 25–26 (at the end of the incident of the withered fig tree), and enlarged to that poetic balancing form which is a favourite with this evangelist. It will be noticed that the saying, whether in its single or in its double form, is intended as a commentary on the prayer for forgiveness and the condition precedent. God forgives only the forgiving. This is not an arbitrary sanction, but a fundamental law which springs from the very nature of personal relations. The sense of being wronged and the vindictive desire to punish the wrong-doer is a poison affecting the whole of a man's soul, and insensibly permeating all his attitude towards man and God. It is impossible to erect a barrier of hatred such that it can cut off the communication of a man's heart only with a single individual. Such a barrier will effectively seal his own soul, and not merely those whom he hates are excluded, but also

those whom he loves—or would love ; neither friend nor foe, neither God nor man can win an entrance. The spirit open to receive love is of necessity open to bestow love, and if the love sought be of that supreme quality which triumphs over injury, so also must be the love bestowed. **'If you do not forgive men, your Father will not forgive your trespasses either.'**

Ver. 12, with its commentary in vers. 14, 15, refers to past failures ; ver. 13 is a prayer for protection in the future. Here again the Third Gospel has a shorter form, omitting the second half of the verse, which clearly balances the first. Once more the extra sentence seems explanatory, and suggests an addition. The petition **lead us not into temptation** has raised difficulties, on the ground that it is only when character and soul have been tested that it is possible for their real worth to appear, and the saying in James i. 2, **Greet it as pure joy, my brothers, when you come across any sort of trial,** has been contrasted with the prayer. Yet no man who realizes the serious issues involved in temptation and the weakness of his own heart in the presence of the enemy can face the prospect with equanimity. To him the conflict must appear doubtful and even desperate until the victory is actually won. There may have been in the minds of the original hearers an eschatological tinge to the words, the **temptation** suggesting the same area of thought as the **distress** of Revelation vii. 14. In either case, the natural instinct is to avoid the trial, and because it is the natural instinct Jesus tells men that it should enter into their prayer life. Therefore the disciples are bidden ask, 'Let us not enter' (the Aramaic word probably used by Jesus lacks the element of deliberate and specific purpose suggested by **lead**) **'into temptation.'** The final clause is, as already suggested, an expansion of the preceding words. As is well known, there is a doubt as to whether the **evil** is personal or not. In view of the parallelism of the clauses the latter seems to have a slight balance of probability in its favour.

16 **When you fast,**
do not look gloomy like the hypocrites,

for they look woebegone to let men see they are fasting;
I tell you truly, they do get their reward.
But when you fast, 17
anoint your head and wash your face,
so that your fast may be seen not by men but by 18
your Father who is in secret,
and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you.

The third illustration is taken from the fast. It is always remarked that only one fast is prescribed in the Law, that of the Day of Atonement. But the bi-weekly fast had become a recognized institution among pious Jews, always provided that certain days were observed on which it was unlawful to fast. For fasting was an outward and visible sign of repentance, an 'affliction of the self,' which corresponded to an inner humiliation. The lesson that Jesus has to teach is the same as in the other instances. There is again humour in the description of the men who make themselves look ugly (**gloomy** refers to expression, **woebegone** to the dirty and unkempt condition which men affected when fasting) **to let men see that they are fasting.** There is the same epithet, **hypocrites**—'actors'—the same stern comment on the success of the fast in securing the object with which it was undertaken, and its failure from the really important point of view, and the same insistence on the right principle and the right method. Repentance is a matter between you and God; it becomes meaningless if you address it to man.

4. *The Demand for Concentration* (vi. 19–34)

The evangelist, in pursuance of his intention to construct an apologetic wherewith to meet and convince the Jew, has given the connexion between the teaching of Jesus on the one hand and the Law and the conventional morality on the other, shewing that the demands made by Jesus are more thorough and searching than either of the others. He now

passes to more positive doctrine, in a section which seems to be composed of a number of isolated sayings or groups of sayings, which appear in Luke in different contexts, though, for the most part, with slight verbal differences. They deal with a variety of subjects, and seem to have been selected as illustrations of various elements in human life which men allow to interfere with a whole-hearted pursuit of the Kingdom of God.

19 **Store up no treasures for yourselves on earth,**
where moth and rust corrode,
where thieves break in and steal :
20 **store up treasures for yourselves in heaven,**
where neither moth nor rust corrode,
where thieves do not break in and steal.
21 **For where your treasure lies,**
your heart will lie there too.

It is interesting to notice that Jesus is speaking to a company of Galilean peasants, and yet dwells largely on the dangers of wealth. Nor is he denouncing others merely for the pleasure of his audience, for money can be just as great a peril of the soul to a poor man as to a rich man, and will be, if he makes it the goal of his life. It is the poor whom he is exhorting not to **store up treasures for** themselves **on earth,** as is shewn from the language he uses. **Break in** is literally ' dig through,' and recalls the mud and wattle hut of the poorest countryman, through which a thief with a knife or trowel would work his way in half an hour on a dark night. Yet even such a hut may contain a scanty hoard of coin, grain, or some fabric which **moth and rust** may **corrode. Treasures** that may be **stored up** on earth are perishable, and if a possession is to be permanent it must be on the spiritual, not on the material, plane. The idea of **storing up treasure in heaven** was familiar to the Jewish mind of Jesus' day, and would be readily accepted by his hearers. It is worth while noting, however, that Jesus does not condemn the accumulation of material wealth merely on this ground. Nor does he denounce the building up of large

fortunes because they may be a danger to the community, as an Isaiah might have done. What he does see and feel is that such a hoard is destructive to him who makes it. It engrosses the miser's thoughts. His aim is to add to it, his anxiety is that it might disappear; all his hopes and fears, ambitions and doubts, are concentrated on it. This means that the thing steals the man's very soul, and he is no longer able to concentrate on that which should absorb him—God and His Kingdom. Instead of lifting his heart to heaven, he has buried it with his savings.

The eye is the lamp of the body: 22
so, if your Eye is generous,
the whole of your body will be illumined,
but if your Eye is selfish, 23
the whole of your body will be darkened.
And if your very light turns dark,
then—what a darkness it is!

The same lesson is enforced in these two verses with another metaphor. As the word rendered **generous** literally means 'single,' but is used here in contrast to **selfish**, or 'grudging,' many commentators take it to mean 'liberal,' a sense actually quoted for it elsewhere. This interpretation rather assumes that the saying was originally uttered for the connexion in which it now stands in this gospel. For this there is hardly enough evidence—Luke places it in an entirely different context, though Matthew thought it had a reference to money—and we should rather look to the phrase itself for its true meaning, independently of its present position. Vision, to be effective, must be concentrated; the **Eye** must be properly focussed. No man can really *see* more than one thing at a time, and the failure of the eye to see the one thing means at least some defect of sight like astigmatism. The **Eye** which is **selfish**—literally 'evil,' a word used to describe ophthalmia, a very common source of blindness in the east—cannot be properly focussed, and gives at best a blurred image, so that it may be nearly useless. Now, the **eye is the lamp of the body**; it is its only channel of light,

and if it fails to do its work, the man's whole power of receiving and appreciating light is gone, and **the whole of his body will be darkened.** If a man wishes to receive the one true light, the glory of God, into his soul, his spirit must be *focussed* on Him ; otherwise it will be impossible for him to form any more than a blurred image of God, even if he can see Him at all.

24 **No one can serve two masters :**
either he will hate one and love the other,
or else he will stand by the one and depise the other—
you cannot serve both God and Mammon.

This verse returns again to the question of money, though again Luke has the saying in a different context (xvi. 13). **Mammon** is a word which literally meant 'hidden,' then 'hidden treasure,' and so is applied especially to **stored treasure.** It is characteristic of Jesus to see things in clear contrast. He is so sure of God that he never has the slightest doubt as to which is God's side, and he turns his microscope on life in such fashion that its distinctions are unmistakable. None can make the best of both worlds ; every man must choose for himself one thing and one only. A slave cannot belong to **two masters** if the result is to be satisfactory, though, as a matter of fact, Jewish Law did in certain cases contemplate a divided ownership. But even so, at any given moment the slave must be doing the will of one or the other. If the two are amicable, some working arrangement may be achieved ; but if they are as hostile to one another as **God and Mammon** are, then the position is hopeless. One thing or the other —that is the demand of Jesus. Again, we note his attitude to wealth. It is impossible to enter here deeply into the subject, but those who recorded his language clearly believed him to be definitely and uncompromisingly opposed to the possession of money, not, apparently on economic or social grounds, but because it was a deadly peril to the soul of its owner.

25 **Therefore I tell you,**
do not trouble about what you are to eat or drink in life,

nor about what you are to put on your body ;
surely life means more than food,
surely the body means more than clothes !
Look at the wild birds ; 26
they sow not, they reap not, they gather nothing in granaries,
and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
Are you not worth more than birds ?
Which of you can add an ell to his height by troubling about it ? 27
And why should you trouble over clothing ? 28
Look how the lilies of the field grow ;
they neither toil nor spin,
and yet, I tell you, even Solomon in all his grandeur was never robed like one of them. 29

Now if God so clothes the grass of the field which blooms to-day and is thrown to-morrow into the furnace, will not he much more clothe you ? O men, how little you trust him ! Do not be troubled, then, and cry, "What are we to eat ? " or "what are we to drink ? " or "how are we to be clothed ? " (pagans make all that their aim in life) for your heavenly Father knows quite well you need all that. Seek God's Realm and his goodness, and all that will be yours over and above. 30 31 32 33

So do not be troubled about to-morrow ; 34
to-morrow will take care of itself.
The day's own trouble is quite enough for the day.

Especially to the poorer classes in the East, things to eat or to drink in life or to put on the body inevitably absorb a large proportion of man's thought and care. The words of Jesus are a warning against concentrating on these things. This warning is based on his appreciation and knowledge of God. To him God was the heavenly Father, and felt as a father does towards the child whom he loves. It is inconceivable that such a one should let His child starve while He feeds others whose claim on Him is weaker. Two features in this familiar argument stand out with great clearness. The

first is Jesus' sense that God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, and the natural world, including the wild birds and the lilies of the field, is directly under His care. Whilst it is true that God's method of working is to proceed along uniform lines which vary only in appearance and never in reality—the 'laws' of nature—it is equally true that He is intimately and deeply concerned in every detail. The scientist or the philosopher may think and speak of God in general terms, but for the purposes of the religious life He must always be seen as personal, and His personality is best expressed in the word Father. Jesus does not say that He is the Father of the birds and the lilies. God can only be a Father to those who can realize Him as such, and recognize that they are His sons. Birds and lilies owe all to Him, but they can neither acknowledge nor attempt to repay the debt. Men can know something of what they owe, and can seek to offer in return that love which is the best thing they have to offer. His supreme passion is for love, and if He lavishes His gifts on creatures who can respond only with beauty and happiness, it is but reasonable to suppose that He will do no less with children who can reply with love. The logic of Jesus is inexorable.

The second obvious point is the appreciation Jesus had of the beauty and value of nature. Here he is in direct line with the prophets, all of whom had been observant of the outside world, and Jeremiah, at least, had worked his way into the secret of the relation of the wild things to their creator. The happy, carefree life of the birds and the glorious beauty of the crimson anemones appealed to him in strong contrast to the sordid and dingy features which mark too much of human life. The best that man can do is immeasurably below the least of the works of God.

To worry, to trouble about things, is thus seen to be totally unnecessary. But that is not all; worry is also utterly useless. There are certain events which are under man's control; in these his business is not to worry but to act. There are others which no effort of body or mind can affect; here his need is for trust. None can add an ell to his height.

Superficially it might seem that the teaching of Jesus might lead to carelessness and slackness. This is to misunderstand his position. Few men have to work as hard for their living as the average sparrow. Pagans (and their extant prayers all over the world illustrate the statement of Jesus) make . . . their aim in life the acquisition of material necessities. Others, of course, need the same things, but Jesus will not allow his disciples to regard them as more than accidental or subsidiary. First seek God's Realm and his goodness, he says; let that be the main purpose of your life. It will cost you something; a search always does. But if you are really concentrated on it, then common sense should tell you that He for whom you toil will see that all that will be yours over and above. Your ordinary occupation is an element in the quest, and you will be assured of the things that pagans make their aim. But you must place them second, not first. The best cure for worry is this concentration on the Realm of heaven.

The teaching of Jesus, then, on worry may be briefly summarized thus. Worry is unnecessary, because God knows and cares. He gave the life; it is only reasonable to expect Him to sustain it. He made the body; it is only reasonable to expect Him to clothe it. He feeds and clothes the lower creation; it is only reasonable to expect Him to feed and clothe His own children. In the second place, worry is futile; it can achieve nothing and escape nothing. In the third place, it is dangerous; it will inevitably conflict with that single-hearted concentration which the quest of the Kingdom demands.

5. *Miscellaneous Subjects* (chap vii.)

The remainder of the Sermon consists of a number of shorter passages which deal with different subjects, and it appears to have less cohesion than the preceding sections. Some of the sayings seem to have been drawn from different sources and to have been grouped together by the evangelist; in others there has been a rearrangement of material drawn from a single source. A good deal of the material has no parallel elsewhere in the gospels.

vii.

1 **Judge not, that you may not be judged yourselves;**
2 **for as you judge so you will be judged,**
and the measure you deal out to others will be dealt out to yourselves.

3 **Why do you note the splinter in your brother's eye and fail**
4 **to see the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Let me take out the splinter from your**
5 **eye," when there lies the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite! take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see properly how to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.**

These verses form an illustration of the way in which Matthew combines his material. The words **the measure you deal out to others will be dealt out to yourselves** are taken from Mark iv. 24, where they appear with other illustrations of the teaching of Jesus at the end of the parable of the Sower. They are parallel in form to **as you judge so you will be judged,** though, as the immediate context shews, they have a somewhat different meaning. They are a statement of a law of retribution, a kind of divine *lex talionis*, involving what we call a 'poetic' justice. It is related of Hillel that once 'he saw a skull floating on the water, and said unto it, Because thou drownedst [another] they drowned thee, and in the end they that drowned thee shall be drowned.'

The warning **judge not,** however, is of a different kind. It is inevitable that we should hold opinions, and almost inevitable that we should express them. At the same time we should recognize the exact risks that we run. Vers. 1, 2*a* can hardly mean that a man can escape all judgments if he refrains from judging others. The least censorious of men is responsible for what he says and does, and the meaning of Jesus must be sought in another direction. The truth is that no man can pass an opinion on any other person or thing without at the same time recording a judgment on himself. He 'gives himself away' more by his criticisms than by any other act or word. It is seldom that a really

humble man brings a charge of conceit against another, and a complaint of another's selfishness is rarely an evidence of altruism in the accuser. Every expression of an opinion implies a standard of judgment, and men are more truly judged by their standards than by anything else. If we hear a stranger abuse one of our intimate friends, we learn nothing new about our friend, but the stranger is at once stamped as either silly or dangerous. The comment passed by a critic on a work of art may or may not be a fair judgment on the artist, but it infallibly betrays the qualifications of the critic. In the act of judgment the man is judged.

Censorious habits also involve men in the further danger that they become blind to their own faults in their eagerness to detect those of others. Not only does this deprive their judgments of objective value, it conceals from them the truth about themselves. One of the reasons why they cannot see the plank in their own eye is that they are busy looking for the splinter in their brother's eye, and it is inevitable that in the end they should fall into the condemnation of those who simply find fault for the sake of appearances—the hypocrites. If such a man really believed the principles he professes to enunciate, he would first of all apply them to his own life, and take the plank out of his own eye. He would then know better how to apply them, and so could take the splinter out of his brother's eye.

Do not give dogs what is sacred and do not throw pearls before swine, in case they trample them under foot and turn to gore you. 6

This is an isolated saying whose connexion with its context is not obvious. Its form is chiastic; it is a double parallel in which the two extremes and the two means balance one another respectively:

Do not give dogs what is sacred,
In case they turn to gore you;
And do not throw pearls before swine,
In case they trample them under foot.

Dogs are the scavengers of the East; it is their function to

eat the refuse and unclean things that lie about the streets. With these things they are perfectly satisfied, and to set before them that which is sacred is to degrade it to the level of the offal in the gutters. Swine are to the Jewish mind the type of all that is most disgusting, and things of price and beauty are not merely wasted on them, but will be misused by them. The animals are sometimes supposed to be heathens and foreigners, but the rabbinic use of the terms justifies a wider application. It has been suggested also that **sacred** and **pearl** do not form a good balance, and that the former may be due to a misunderstanding of an Aramaic word derived from the root which expresses ' holiness ' but generally means ' an earring.' More probably, however, **sacred** was the word actually used by Jesus, and it suggested the **pearl** through the association just mentioned.

We cannot help asking whether Jesus was serious in this remark, or whether it was one of those prudential maxims which he knew and occasionally quoted, perhaps with a smile on his lips, as an appeal to his immediate audience. For not a few of those who know him, and God in him, would confess that often the divine offering of love made to them has been but as **pearls thrown to swine**, and that they have responded, not merely with rejection, but with positive hostility to the most **sacred** of gifts.

7 **Ask and the gift will be yours, seek and you will find,**
knock and the door will open to you ;
8 **for every one who asks receives, the seeker finds,**
the door is opened to anyone who knocks.
9 **Why, which of you, when asked by his son for a loaf,**
will hand him a stone ?
10 **Or, if he asks a fish, will you hand him a serpent ?**
11 **Well, if for all your evil you know to give your children**
what is good,
how much more will your Father in heaven give
good gifts to those who ask him ?

This passage appears in Luke amongst other sayings on the subject of prayer, including the Lord's Prayer (Luke

xi. 9–13). The two versions differ slightly in the phrasing of ver. 9, where Luke has **egg** and **scorpion** for **loaf** and **stone.** To Jesus the most certain of all facts was his Father, and he lived consciously in the atmosphere of that Father's goodness and love. To him it was inconceivable that God should not be infinitely wiser and kinder than any human parent. The latter may have little or no moral principle; he may be just the kind of person who would **hand a stranger a stone when asked for a loaf,** or **a serpent** for **a fish.** But even the most rascally of men will nevertheless be honest and kind in dealing with the requests of his own children, especially if they are asking for obvious necessities.

But suppose the child **ask for a stone,** believing it to be **a loaf,** or for **a serpent,** mistaking it for **a fish?** The possibility of a better gift than that which is asked is certainly not excluded. It may be that the objects in ver. 7 are left intentionally vague. **Ask and** *some* **gift will be yours; seek and you will find** *something;* **knock and** *some* **door will open to you.** Even if it be too fanciful to suspect that this indefiniteness is deliberate, we can fall back on the logic of Jesus, and carry it a step further. It by no means follows that the father will not give the child something better than what he asks, especially if the desired gift be useless or dangerous. What the earthly father would do, the **Father in heaven** will do, but in immeasurably greater wisdom and love.

Well then, whatever you would like men to do to you, do 12
just the same to them; that is the meaning of the Law and the prophets.

The 'Golden Rule' has been accepted practically everywhere as a simple ideal of conduct, and needs no further comment. Here it is isolated, and has clearly (as shewn by the **then**) been removed from another position. It stands in Luke at the end of a passage which deals with the love of one's enemies (Luke vi. 31), though even that is not necessarily the original context. It is one of those great independent utterances whose value and meaning are not affected by their position or their age.

13 **Enter by the narrow gate :**
for [the gate] is broad and the road is wide that leads
to destruction,
and many enter that way.
14 **But the road that leads to life is both narrow and close,**
and there are few who find it.

The eschatological tinge in this saying is even clearer in the Lucan form (Luke xiii. 34), where only the **narrow gate** is mentioned, and that leads directly into the Kingdom. The disciples have asked whether only a few shall be ' saved,' and a picture is drawn of a house whose owner will only admit guests through this narrow door and up to a certain time. A large crowd is trying to get in, and it is necessary to struggle desperately to win an entrance at all. It is not enough merely to choose the right gate, for even when the choice is made, an entry is by no means assured. In Matthew it seems as if the saying had been adapted to the parable of the two ways, familiar both in Jewish and in heathen literature. The eschatological flavour is preserved by the use of the words **destruction** and **life**.

15 **Beware of false prophets ; they come to you with the garb of**
16 **sheep but at heart they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruit ; do men gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles ? No.**

17 **every good tree bears sound fruit,**
but a rotten tree bears bad fruit ;
18 **a good tree cannot bear bad fruit,**
and a rotten tree cannot bear sound fruit.

20 **So you will know them by their fruit. Any tree that does**
19 **not produce sound fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.**
21 **It is not everyone who says to me " Lord, Lord ! " who will get into the Realm of heaven, but he who does the will**
22 **of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me at that Day, " Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name ? did we not cast out daemons in your name ? did we not**

perform many miracles in your name?" Then I will 23
declare to them, "I never knew you; *depart from my presence, you workers of iniquity.*"

This warning against false disciples follows not inaptly on the preceding verses. It may be assumed that if **there are few who find the road that leads to life,** many will pose as guides to it, but merely for their own advantage and for the sake of what they can get from the searchers. In a less expanded form the section appears also in Luke vi. 43–46 and xiii. 26–27, and was probably constructed out of elements from different sources. A definitely eschatological tone is given to the whole sermon by the way in which this passage leads up to the conclusion.

If men, in their attempt to discover the **way that is both narrow and close,** commit themselves to a guide, it is natural that they should demand some criterion as to his qualifications. They will find men wearing the old-fashioned prophetic mantle of wool or sheepskin, coming **in the garb of sheep,** who yet are neither real sheep nor real prophets. The aims of such a man are selfish, and he will leave the seeker in a worse position than before. How, then, is a man to decide whether to follow the specious and plausible leader or not? Jesus offers a clear criterion. Study the man's life. **You will know them by their fruit.** The laws of character and its results are just as absolute in the world of personality as they are in the vegetable kingdom. If the **fruit** is **bad,** the **tree** is **rotten,** and, as John the Baptist had said, it **will be cut down and thrown into the fire.**

This leads us into a purely eschatological atmosphere. The false prophet may have all the outward signs of the true, the speech and the powers. He may say **Lord, Lord,** he may **cast out daemons** in the **name** of Jesus, and **perform many miracles,** but Jesus has never known him. We notice how Jesus here accepts, indeed claims, the position of the Messiah who is to judge the world in **that Day.** And his only standard of approval is that a man shall have done **the will of his Father in heaven.** Those who have failed to attain this

are as trees in a garden, all with labels attached, but the fruit that they have yielded does not correspond to the names written on them. To such the Judge has only one thing to say: **depart from my presence, you workers of iniquity.**

24 **Now, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts**
upon them will be like a sensible man who built his
25 **house on rock. The rain came down, the floods rose, the**
winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall,
26 **for it was founded on rock. And everyone who listens**
to these words of mine and does not act upon them will
27 **be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. The**
rain came down, the floods rose, the winds blew and beat
upon that house, and down it fell—with a mighty crash.'

This parable appears with slight differences in Luke vi. 47–49. The most important variation is that in Luke the two builders choose similar sites, but the **sensible man** digs a foundation, while the **stupid man** simply puts up his house on the surface of the sand. In Luke, also, the destructive storm is described as a flood. Probably this evangelist has preserved the original form, though the variations do not affect the fundamental meaning. In lands where houses have to be built on the mountain-side, it is usually necessary to build out a solid revetment, which should be made continuous with the native rock. If a careless or dishonest builder is content to run a wall across and to fill in the space with earth instead of with solid bricks, a heavy rain-storm may wash the earth away, and leave the house to fall. The man who, hearing the teaching of Jesus, fails to accept it as a guide for life, is in still worse case. There may be an eschatological element in the parable, the **rain**, the **flood**, and the **wind** being the testing storms of the Day of Judgment. The context in Luke does not suggest that this is prominent, but the position in which Matthew places the section makes us suspect that his interest in eschatology has led him to interpret this passage in that light. In any case it would have been difficult to find a more impressive close to the great Sermon.

When Jesus finished his speech, the crowds were astounded 28
at his teaching; for he taught them like an authority, 29
not like their own scribes.

These two verses do not belong to the Sermon proper. They serve, not only to give the effect of the words of Jesus on his hearers, but also to form a transition to the historical succession of events. The words are used by Mark (i. 22) in describing the effect of the teaching of Jesus in the synagogue. The Sermon itself affords the best explanation we have of the verses, and shews us why **the crowds were astounded at his teaching**, especially that portion of the Sermon which is contained in v. 21–48. The teaching of the scribes was, in its way, admirable. It has been the fashion in some quarters to decry its value, and, indeed, it should not be overestimated, but it had conspicuous virtues. The Mishnah, which is the earliest embodiment of scribal teaching that has come down to us in book form, is a genuine attempt to interpret the Law of God in such a manner that men should be saved from unintentional and unwitting transgression. The men who compiled it (and it had a long history before reaching its present shape) were deeply religious scholars, who saw first and foremost the will of God, and aimed above all things at doing it.

It may seem to us ridiculous to argue as to whether it was lawful or unlawful to eat an egg laid on the Sabbath, but we cannot help admiring the men whose enthusiasm for the doing of what God required carried them to extreme logical lengths. They were, too, patient and honest scholars, in the main, with a great fund of learning, and we owe to them a heavy debt of gratitude, if only for their labours on the text of the Old Testament. The greatest of them were deeply humble men, and did not often venture to express an independent opinion of their own. They recognized that they were the inheritors of a great wealth of devoted study, at least from the days of Ezra downwards, and they drew freely on the accumulated stores of wisdom. A Hillel, a Shammai, or a Gamaliel might offer original interpretation or authorita-

tive dictum, but the average teacher was content to fall back on the sayings of the great men of the past. The result was constant citation of others, endless reference to people greater than themselves. It is as if they had said, 'I have neither the wisdom nor the piety to dare to make a pronouncement of my own, but Rabbi X has said thus, and Rabbi Y thus, handing down words of value from generations gone by.' This is probably the best method for smaller men, conscious of their own limitations, and is far to be preferred to an ignorant and ill-considered dogmatism.

But, however admirable the method of the scribes may be, it is apt to be uninspiring, and is very inferior to the method of the teacher who really knows his subject, and does not need to refer to the opinions of others. True genius may, and to some extent must, stand on the shoulders of its predecessors, but that is not its real importance. The outstanding mark of the great teacher is always his originality. The stores of knowledge which he has absorbed from others have been transmuted in his mind, and the result is an entirely new product. He could not teach from a text-book, because no text-book sees the subject as he sees it. He seldom quotes the opinions of others, because he knows for himself.

Jesus must have been familiar with the rabbinic method, and had heard the scribes, Sabbath after Sabbath, expounding and exhorting. He had listened to the long strings of names with which every important utterance was supported and authenticated. He knew his Bible, especially Deuteronomy and the Prophets. But he knew more than these things: he knew God. That is to say, he was not merely familiar with facts about God, but his Father was to him the most real of all persons, the most intimate of all friends. This is to some of us the most striking feature of Jesus. We know God, but imperfectly and intermittently; Jesus knew Him fully and permanently. Hence he had no need to rely on the opinions of his predecessors; he was himself the supreme authority. He did not even need the testimony of his Bible, and where that gave a false impression of God, he did not hesitate to correct it. He could thus say things which others

could never have guessed, and things which they would not have dared to utter if they had guessed them. And the impression made by his teaching was not a matter of detail. It was the whole, taken together with his amazing personality that so affected men with his sureness of touch and his certainty of truth. He never guessed, and never qualified his statements. He saw universal truth as God sees it, and *knew* that he had the mind of his Father. That was the source of his authority—he knew God.

IV. viii. 1–ix. 34 : A Group of Miracles, with Some Attached Sayings

Following on the Law of the Messianic Kingdom, the evangelist gives his readers a series of illustrations of the miraculous power of the Christ. The incidents are mainly taken from Mark, and Matthew has included one or two events which are connected with miracles in his source, though they are not in themselves miraculous. He probably felt that they ought not to be omitted, and so they retain their original position, though they do not directly add to the development of the main thesis of the section.

viii.

When he came down from the hill, he was followed by large 1
crowds. A leper came up and knelt before him, saying, 2
'If you only choose, sir, you can cleanse me'; so he 3
stretched his hand out and touched him, with the words,
'I do choose, be cleansed.' And his leprosy was cleansed 4
at once. Then Jesus told him, 'See, you are not to say
a word to anybody; away and show yourself to the priest
and offer the gift prescribed by Moses, to notify men.'

The first of the miracles selected is the cure of a leper, taken from Mark i. 40–45. It is noticeable that this writer omits the cure of the demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum, though he notes the effect of the teaching of Jesus in language derived from Mark's account of that scene (Matthew vii. 28 f. = Mark i. 22). It probably appealed to the evangelist as being comparatively unimportant. There were many who

could cure demoniacs, and exorcism was no unique feature of the Messiah. The account of the healing of the leper is somewhat condensed from Mark, omitting the expression of strong emotion contained in Mark i. 43 and the fact that the patient went about telling the story of his cure. This last point was essential for the historical development of the ministry of Jesus, but had no particular bearing on Matthew's main interests.

5 When he entered Capharnahum an army-captain came up to
6 him and appealed to him, saying, 'Sir, my servant is
7 lying ill at home with paralysis, in terrible agony.' He
8 replied, 'I will come and heal him.' The captain answered, 'Sir, I am not fit to have you under my roof;
9 only say the word, and my servant will be cured. For though I am a man under authority myself, I have soldiers under me; I tell one man to go, and he goes, I tell another to come, and he comes, I tell my servant, "Do this," and
10 he does it.' When Jesus heard that, he marvelled; 'I tell you truly,' he said to his followers, 'I have never met
11 faith like this anywhere in Israel. Many, I tell you, will come *from east and west* and take their places beside Abra-
12 ham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Realm of heaven, while the sons of the Realm will pass outside, into the darkness;
13 there men will wail and gnash their teeth.' Then Jesus said to the captain, 'Go; as you have had faith, your prayer is granted.' And the servant was cured at that very hour.

The next miracle in the series is taken from Q (Luke vii. 1–10), not from Mark, where it does not occur. Its presence here may be due to the fact that in Q it seems to have followed immediately on one of the sections of teaching employed in the construction of the Sermon on the Mount. As usual the actual narrative is much contracted. Nothing is said about the intercession of 'the elders of the Jews,' and the army-captain comes himself in person to Jesus. The primary lesson, however, remains unaffected. Jesus finds in this foreigner—was he a proselyte?—a faith the like of which

he has never met in Israel. Matthew finds this a convenient context in which to insert a saying found also in Luke xiii. 28 f., though there are substantial differences in the order of the words. This is a good illustration of the author's eschatological interests. The fact that this Gentile surpasses all the Jews in faith suggests that in the final consummation of the Realm of heaven the Jew will have by no means a monopoly. He has claims on the Realm. It is his by right of inheritance and by divine purpose—he is a son of the Realm (Luke has 'you' instead of this phrase), and it naturally belongs to him; he is in a sense spiritually royal. But the full attainment of his heritage depends on his power to satisfy the final test of faith. Can he believe that his God so manifests Himself and so works in Jesus as to nullify the purely material restriction of space? Does he realize that the force of Jesus is independent of physical contact, that the supreme power in the world is invisible and spiritual? If he cannot do this, then he must give place to any man, however distant in race and speech, who can exhibit this faith in Jesus.

On entering the house of Peter, Jesus noticed his mother-in-law 14
was down with fever, so he touched her hand; the fever 15
left her and she rose and ministered to him.
Now when evening came they brought him many demoniacs, 16
and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all the
invalids—that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah 17
might be fulfilled, *He took away our sicknesses and he removed our diseases.*

These verses continue the record of miraculous cures, and are condensed from Mark i. 29–34. In the original the events described all fall on the Sabbath, which Mark selects as typical of the activity of Jesus in Capernaum, and, perhaps, the first exhibition of the healing powers of Jesus. Matthew does not explain why it was only when evening was come that they brought him the various sufferers, and omits the names of the disciples who accompanied Jesus into the house of Peter (note that the name is here Peter, not Simon, as in Mark). The essential features of the narrative are repro-

duced—the touch (Mark has 'grasp') of Jesus' hand, and the fact that the patient recovered at once so fully that she rose and ministered to him. Two changes of importance are made in the second part of the section. In the first place, where Mark says that Jesus healed 'many,' our evangelist says all the invalids. It is inconceivable to him that Jesus should have allowed anyone to remain in suffering, and he is clearly anxious to avoid the least suggestion of any limitation of his powers. In the second place Matthew, true to his conception of Jesus as the fulfilment of all messianic prophecy, finds here an explanation of the familiar verse Isaiah liii. 4. It is important to observe that the words **He took away our sicknesses and he removed our diseases** are a literal translation of the Hebrew text; the common Greek version has 'He bears our sins and suffers for us.' Clearly the evangelist quoted the verse from a collection of 'Testimonies,' made originally in Hebrew. Many of them might have been accommodated to the familiar Greek version, but here that would have been inapplicable, and a literal rendering is retained. It is also interesting to notice that the use of the passage as messianic is characteristically Christian; the earliest occurrence of this interpretation in Jewish literature seems to have been in the book of Enoch. It is, however, not uncommon in the Jewish literature of the first Christian centuries.

18 When Jesus saw crowds round him he gave orders for a crossing
19 to the other side. A scribe came up and said to him,
20 'Teacher, I will follow you anywhere'; Jesus said to him,

> 'The foxes have their holes,
> the wild birds have their nests,
> but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.'

21 Another of the disciples said to him, 'Lord, let me go and
22 bury my father first of all'; Jesus said to him, 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.'

The introductory verse is taken from Mark iv. 35, where it follows a group of parables. The displacement may be due

to the fact that the next incident which Matthew is taking from his source is the stilling of the storm, in connexion with which Mark makes the statement. But first Matthew inserts a passage taken from Q (Luke ix. 57–60) describing the conditions of discipleship. Two recruits are mentioned, one a scribe who volunteers, the other expressly summoned by Jesus himself. It does not follow that he wishes to discourage the former, but Jesus would have none follow him blindly. It is easy for a sudden and emotional enthusiasm to lead a man to offer himself. But Jesus knew only too well the kind of service that is rendered by those on whom his word has fallen as seed on rocky ground. He would have men count the cost, know what they are doing, face all the possibilities. They must be prepared to follow him in all things, to drink of his cup and to be baptized with his baptism. They must remember that he is worse off than the foxes and the wild birds, for he has nowhere to lay his head.

So we have here one of those occasional references which Jesus made to the conditions of his own ministry, and to his own minor experience. Possibly the insertion of the passage is due to a feeling that it is an illustration of the friendlessness of the Messiah depicted in Isaiah liii. He is the Son of man —clearly used by him as a messianic title—and yet his lot is, in those things which often count most for men, worse than that of the very wild animals. We might almost suspect that, but for that faith which taught him that any man was worth more to his Father than all the living world of Creation, he might have been inclined to envy the foxes and the birds. For at least they had homes ; he had none. It is impossible not to feel that in the Johannine account of the death of Jesus we have an echo of his words here. For there, at the very end, ' he bowed his head,' and the verb used is that which is here rendered lay. It was true. Already the emphasis is laid on the difference between the Messiah of popular expectation and the true Christ. Throughout his ministry the latter has no home, no place that he can call his own, and the only pillow on which he can claim to take his rest is the Cross. And this is a condition which his followers must be prepared to

accept. They may escape it, but they have no right to complain, no reason to be discouraged, if their lot is that of their Lord.

The second incident illustrates the stringency of the demands which Jesus makes upon his followers. When once a man is pledged to the Christ, *nothing* must be allowed to interfere with his duty. To bury a father is one of the most sacred responsibilities that the Jew recognized. For him the priest was allowed to defile himself, and the honouring of parents, which reached its climax in the last rites of death, is said in the Mishnah to be one of those things which confer a permanent possession in heaven, while even in this life interest is paid on it. Yet when once a man has been quickened to the new spiritual life by the call of Jesus, even the most sacred of human obligations must take subordinate rank. These things are right and proper for the dead, those who are still living in the old universe, the universe of Death ; but in the new order, where Life in Jesus reigns supreme, his needs and his demands have an overwhelming claim.

23 Then he embarked in the boat, followed by his disciples. Now
24 a heavy storm came on at sea, so that the boat was buried
25 under the waves. He was sleeping. So the disciples went and woke him up, saying, 'Help, Lord, we are
26 drowning!' He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? How little you trust God!' Then he got up and checked
27 the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. Men marvelled at this ; they said, 'What sort of man is this? the very winds and sea obey him!'

The record of miracle is resumed with the stilling of the storm. The narrative is taken from Mark iv. 36–41, but striking alterations have been made, all, apparently, in order to avoid suggestion of human weakness. At the outset Jesus takes the lead ; in Mark he is overcome by complete exhaustion, and the disciples take him. When the boat is swamping, they appeal to him : **Help, Lord, we are drowning** ; in Mark they clearly have no idea that he can do anything,

for they are amazed when he stills the storm (a feature of the narrative which Matthew has failed to eliminate). What they want is that he shall share their panic ; it is intolerable that he shall be unaware of the danger in which all stand. Here his rebuke to the disciples comes before the stilling of the tempest ; in Mark it follows it. But the essential lesson is not obscured. They may be in danger of being drowned, but that is a small matter. If they really trusted God with that faith which Jesus has, and which he expects them to have, they could face a fisherman's death with calm confidence in the God who made the gale as well as the sunshine, and loves his children far beyond the gates of death.

When he reached the opposite side, the country of the Gadarenes, 28
he was met by two demoniacs who ran out of the tombs ;
they were so violent that nobody could pass along the
road there. They shrieked, ' Son of God, what business 29
have you with us ? Have you come here to torture us
before it is time ? ' Now, some distance away, there 30
was a large drove of swine grazing ; so the daemons 31
begged him saying, ' If you are going to cast us out,
send us into that drove of swine.' He said to them, 32
' Begone ! ' So out they came and went to the swine
and the entire drove rushed down the steep slope into the
sea and perished in the water. The herdsmen fled ; they 33
went off to the town and reported the whole affair of the
demoniacs.
Then all the town came out to meet Jesus, and when they 34
saw him they begged him to move out of their district.

The list of miracles is continued from Mark (v. 1–20). The narrative is greatly condensed, Matthew's account occupying less than half the space of the original. He speaks, however, of two demoniacs instead of one, and omits a number of graphic details. There is no question of the name of the possessing spirit, which in Mark is given as Legion, and the conversation is shortened. The spirits recognize Jesus as the Son of God, but their plea has a more distinctly eschato-

logical tone than in Mark, for instead of asking that they may not be tormented at once—as they feel Jesus might well ordain—they look forward to a time when their torment is certain, and express the fear that it is coming before it is time. One important difference lies in the omission of Mark's last sentences, in which the patient asks that he may be allowed to accompany Jesus and is refused. This is necessary to Mark's picture of the general plans and methods of Jesus, but it is of no interest to Matthew.

A discussion of the miracle in general belongs properly to a special study of the gospel of Mark. But there are one or two questions raised on which some remark may be made. The cure of demoniacs was a regular feature of the work of Jesus, and it is necessary to appreciate the thought of his time to realize its place in his ministry. The symptoms would to-day doubtless be ascribed to some form of nervous or mental disease, perhaps to epilepsy, but the ancient world never included cases of this kind under the head of physical sickness, nor was it the function of the physician to cure them. Men believed themselves to live in a world peopled by spiritual beings, of whom the greater number were malicious. Comparatively few, even of the most highly cultured, succeeded in liberating themselves from the terror of the unseen, and animistic ideas persisted alongside of the 'higher' religions, much as they do in India to-day.

It is difficult for the modern western mind to realize the atmosphere of dread in which the greater part of the world lives to-day, and which was the universal air of ancient times. We have behind us a great tradition of Christian teaching and of scientific training, and before the combination of enemies the old animistic ideas have practically died. But while we may feel tempted to brand such beliefs as 'superstition,' and to regard with a sense at least of superiority those who hold them, it behoves us to try to enter into the feelings of the greater part of humanity, who have not shared in our experience. For education alone cannot wholly dispel the animist creed. A Thucydides, a Euripides, or a Lucretius may succeed in rising above it, at the price of

practical atheism, or a Confucius may feel able to face it in a security of duly performed ritual. But the great nations —intellectually, perhaps, the greatest we have yet known —to which these individuals belonged have never wholly outgrown the primitive view of the world, and the plays of Aristophanes and the daily conversation of a comparatively well-educated Moslem or Hindu will serve to shew how belief in these spirits is woven into the very fabric of all their thinking. Christianity, too, unless it be accompanied by a high degree of culture, will not destroy a belief in the existence of the spirits, and, in its lowest forms, may still leave men a prey to the terrors of the invisible world.

But it seems to have been an essential element in the teaching and work of Jesus to destroy fear of every kind. Fear was, to his mind, incompatible with faith, and faith was the very root of a right relation to the Heavenly Father. He could not possibly have persuaded men that evil spirits did not exist ; he could and did prove that such forces need have no power or influence over human life. He did not need the familiar procedure of the professional exorcist. It was enough for him to speak, and the dreaded thing must grovel beneath his command. In him men might find a defender and a champion whose very name meant victory, and no small part of the exultant triumph which marks the early Christian spirit was due to the sudden freeing of man from a looming terror which had become so basic a habit of thought as to be hardly noticeable till it was removed.

The fate of the swine has aroused much discussion. It has been suggested that what actually occurred was a coincidence between the cure worked by Jesus and a sudden access of frenzy in the animals. Originally quite independent, the two were connected by the observers, and the conversation between Jesus and his patients was adapted to the event. At the same time it must be remembered that in matters of this kind Jesus always used the thought and the language of his contemporaries. It would by no means necessarily follow that swine possessed by devils should immediately commit suicide—the contrary might be expected.

ix.

1 So he embarked in the boat and crossed over to his own town.
2 There a paralytic was brought to him, lying on a pallet; and when Jesus saw the faith of the bearers he said to the paralytic, 'Courage, my son! your sins are forgiven.'
3 Some scribes said to themselves, 'The man is talking
4 blasphemy!' Jesus saw what they were thinking and
5 said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts? Which is the easier thing, to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to
6 say, "Rise and walk"? But to let you see the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins'—he then said to
7 the paralytic, 'Get up, lift your pallet, and go home.'
8 And he got up and went home. The crowds who saw it were awed and glorified God for giving such power to men.

To add to his list of miracles, the evangelist goes back to an earlier section of Mark (ii. 1–12), bringing Jesus back to his own town of Capernaum, and tells the story of the paralytic. Again the narrative is abbreviated; in particular, no mention is made of the breaking-up of the roof. In the original the purpose of the narrative is to illustrate the steps by which the religious leaders of the people were alienated from Jesus. This is no part of Matthew's scheme, but at the same time he records the important feature, the question of the forgiveness of sins. Yet the reason is different. What this evangelist seeks to emphasize is the quality of the messianic powers of Jesus, and to insist that he has this divine right. We may perhaps put the difference between the outlook of the two gospels by saying that we suspect in Mark that the words of Jesus are justified because men may forgive, and in Matthew they are justified because Jesus is more than man. Even so, the spectators—perhaps because Jesus used the phrase Son of man, to the Aramaic ear identical with 'man'—recognized that God gives such power to men.

9 As Jesus passed along from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax-office; he said to him, 'Follow me'; and he rose and followed him.
10 Jesus was at table indoors, and many taxgatherers and sinners had come to be guests with him and his disciples.

So when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 11
'Why does your teacher eat with taxgatherers and sinners?'
When Jesus heard it he said, 'Those who are strong 12
have no need of a doctor, but those who are ill. Go and 13
learn the meaning of this word, *I care for mercy not for*
***sacrifice.* For I have not come to call just men but**
sinners.'

The evangelist interrupts the series of miracles with narratives of two events, the feast of the publican-disciple and the challenge on fasting. The reason seems to be simply that he wishes to include them in his work, and that in his source (Mark ii. 13–17, 18–22) they followed immediately on the cure of the paralytic. As elsewhere, so in both these sections the Marcan narrative is abbreviated, though without the loss of any fundamental features, and there are a few other variations. The most noticeable of these in the first section is in the name of the disciple. In Mark he is called Levi (as also in Luke), but here his name is given as **Matthew**. It follows that there was some reason for this deliberate alteration; and we can only conjecture that it was due to the absence of Levi from the list of the Twelve and the desire to include this disciple, whose call was so conspicuous, amongst them. The suggestion that the two names were borne by the same person is not impossible, though it is not very probable, for as a rule where we have two names given to the same individual, it either happens that one is a 'nickname' or that the two are derived from different languages. We can understand why Simon should be 'surnamed' Peter, or Joseph 'surnamed' Barnabas, and why the same man might have a Hebrew and a Latin name, as John Mark did, or an Aramaic and a Greek name, such as Cephas-Peter, but there seems no reason for such a connexion as Matthew-Levi.

More important is the introduction of a quotation from Hosea vi. 6, apparently from the LXX rather than direct from the Hebrew, which would be more naturally translated 'I delight in . . .' than 'I care for . . .' The sentence is similarly introduced in xii. 7, in another passage where Jesus is condemning the narrow bigotry involved in the outlook of

the professionally religious people of his day. Whether Jesus actually used the words in either connexion, we can hardly say for certain, but they are entirely in accord with his general position. The significance of the term **mercy** has been discussed in connexion with chap. v. 7, and it is enough to remind ourselves that it is essentially a quality which affects personal relations. As always, to Jesus these were the things that counted most, and it is well worth while noting that this incident had not the same significance for Matthew that it had for Mark. To the latter, the historian, it was one of the events which led to a breach between Jesus and the religious leaders of his time, for it involved his claim to control and, if need be, to supersede the recognized conventions of social life.

But to our evangelist it has a further import. If Jesus claims this authority, he does so in the interests of humanity—indeed of humanitarianism. It might be a recognized religious duty—a **sacrifice**—to abstain from intercourse, especially from that very close intercourse implied by the common meal, with improper persons, but Jesus knew himself to be their healer, and the demands of their humanity could not be resisted. Yet further, it was not only he who should recognize these demands. They should be universally binding. **Taxgatherers and sinners** might be disreputable and wicked—Jesus never pretended that they were not ; but they were *human*, and any custom, any law which set them apart, assigned them to a different species, was a violation of the will of the universal Father who called them all His children. Personality, even human personality at its worst, was to Jesus so magnificent a thing as to transcend all other interests and all other claims. This, at the very least, he would have us understand when he bids us **learn the meaning of Hosea's word.**

14 **Then the disciples of John came up to him and said, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast a great deal, and your disciples do not fast ? '**

15 **Jesus said to them,**

'Can friends at a wedding mourn so long as the bridegroom is beside them ?

A time will come when the bridegroom is taken from them,
and then they will fast.
No one sews a piece of undressed cloth on an old coat, 16
for the patch breaks away from it,
and the tear is made worse :
nor do men pour fresh wine into old wineskins, 17
otherwise the wineskins burst,
and the wine is spilt, the wineskins are ruined.
They put fresh wine into fresh wineskins,
and so both are preserved.'

This incident is also taken from Mark (ii. 18–22), and is used by him for the same purpose as the last. It is a claim to control, and, if necessary or desirable, to supersede, the recognized ' means of grace,' for such fasting certainly was and is to the Oriental. The thing which Jesus has to bring into the world is so new, so vital, that it will ferment and explode if any attempt is made to bind it down to old forms. It is a spiritual thing, and to be effective in the world at all must have a container of some kind, but that container must be elastic, not rigid, or the one will burst and the other be wasted. The new spiritual life must create for itself its own body, and evolve its own ' means of grace,' and of these last the highest and most effective will be direct communion and fellowship with Jesus.

As he said this, an official came in and knelt before him, saying, 18
' My daughter is just dead ; do come and lay your hands
on her, and she will live.' So Jesus rose and went after 19
him, accompanied by his disciples. Now a woman who 20
had had a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind
him and touched the tassel of his robe ; what she said to 21
herself was this, ' If I can only touch his robe, I will re-
cover.' Then Jesus turned round, and when he saw her 22
he said, ' Courage, my daughter, your faith has made you
well.' And the woman was well from that hour. Now 23
when Jesus reached the official's house and saw the flute-
players and the din the crowd were making, he said, ' Be 24
off with you ; the girl is not dead but asleep.' They

25 **laughed at him. But after the crowd had been put out,**
26 **he went in and took her hand, and the girl rose up. The report of this went all over that country.**

The list of miracles is now resumed with an account of the raising from the dead of the daughter of **an official**, and the cure of **a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years.** The source of the passage is Mark v. 21–43. The narrative is condensed to little more than a third of its original length, and there are one or two important changes. Mark leaves it uncertain whether the child was really dead ; when her father (whose name is given) comes first to Jesus he says that she is at the last extremity, and though a message reaches him to say that she has actually passed away, when Jesus sees her he declares that she is not really dead but only asleep. The words in Mark may have a perfectly literal meaning, but our evangelist desires to leave no doubt in the minds of his readers. As he tells the story the girl is **dead** when the father leaves the house, and he definitely asks Jesus to restore her to life. When they arrive, the place is already full of the professional mourners, and, apparently, the first preparations for the funeral are being made. The words of Jesus, **the girl is not dead but asleep,** must then be metaphorically interpreted—death, to the Christian, is no more than a sleep, but it is a sleep from which Jesus alone can awaken men. A comparison between these two passages is of interest, for it may illustrate the way in which stories of miracle may have arisen from events which were originally capable of a ' natural ' or normal interpretation.

The healing of the woman is compressed into three verses, and the great lesson of the narrative, the efficacy of her faith, is stressed. Once more, however, it is to be noted that all details which might suggest limitation of the knowledge of Jesus are omitted. In Mark he knows that power has proceeded from him, but has to ask who it is that has been healed ; here he simply turns round and sees the woman, apparently knowing at once that it is she who has **touched the tassel of his robe.**

As Jesus passed along from there, he was followed by two 27
blind men who shrieked, ' Son of David, have pity on us ! '
When he went indoors the blind men came up to him, and 28
Jesus asked them, ' Do you believe I can do this ? ' They
said, ' Yes, sir.' Then he touched their eyes and said, 29
' As you believe, so your prayer is granted,' and their eyes 30
were opened. Jesus sternly charged them, ' See, nobody
is to know of this.' But they went out and spread the 31
news of him all over that country.

This passage narrates the cure of **two blind men.** Once more it is their faith that makes restoration possible. The story is not found elsewhere, but there are interesting resemblances to the account of a cure performed at Jericho on Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem. In both narratives there are **two blind men,** who appeal to Jesus in exactly the same words, calling him the **Son of David,** and in both **he touched their eyes** to effect a cure. Other details are different, but nevertheless it is tempting to suggest that we have here, possibly, two accounts of the same event, one derived from Mark and the other from an independent source. The evangelist adds that Jesus enjoined silence, but was disobeyed. This unwillingness to be known as a worker of miracles is very obvious in Mark, but less prominent in Matthew.

As they went out, a dumb man was brought to him, who was 32
possessed by a daemon, and when the daemon had been 33
cast out, the dumb man spoke. Then the crowd mar-
velled ; they said, ' Such a thing has never been seen in
Israel ! '

This, the last miracle in this section, relates the healing of a **dumb man** possessed by a **daemon.** There is appended a verse which properly belongs to an entirely different context, occurring again in xii. 24, where it is essential to the narrative, and is attested also by the Marcan parallel. Some texts omit it, and some editors believe it to be a later insertion, though it is not impossible that the evangelist sought already to give a hint as to the reception that Jesus' miracles received from the Pharisees.

There are thus ten 'miracles' recorded in this section, viii. 1–ix. 34. Two of these are exorcisms, one is the raising of the dead, six are cures of disease, and one is a 'nature' miracle. The modern mind cannot refrain from asking questions as to the historicity of these narratives. The tendency in many quarters—not in all, for some have the faculty of simply accepting the narratives without asking questions—is to lay stress on the fullness of the Incarnation, and to doubt whether abnormal, indeed superhuman, powers can be ascribed to Jesus without detracting from the completeness of his humanity. So far from feeling that his Deity will suffer from having human limitations imposed upon it, the instinct of such students is to see in the acceptance of these limitations a more completely divine entry into human life. Paradoxical as it may seem to many, the very attribution of miracle to Jesus is a stumbling-block to faith, not because the events are in themselves entirely incredible, but because they present us with a God becoming man who is yet only partially man, and cannot, therefore, enter truly into human experience. Minds of this type will naturally seek to 'explain away' some features of the record.

It is noticed that there are three very distinct classes of miracle, the exorcisms, the cure of diseases, and the nature miracles. The first can easily be explained on psychological principles, which are gradually being understood. There are parallels to the second too numerous and too well authenticated to be lightly thrown on one side, and it is more and more agreed that there is a spiritual as well as a physical element in the cure of all disease, and that, given one of such intense convictions and of such unique personal force as Jesus, his cures ordinarily need cause no serious difficulty. He healed the sick, it might be said, because he was excessively human, not because he was superhuman. But the third class cannot be so explained, and it is necessary to question the literal accuracy of the narrative if this point of view is to be met.

In this connexion it should be observed that certain types of mind must have miracle in order to make a religion credible. They find the supremacy of God over Nature not so much in

His power to maintain Law, as in His power to supersede it. If He created the world order, if He be indeed its King, He must prove His regal authority by occasional interference with it, by the temporary suspension of Law. Such minds must have miracle, or they cannot believe, and if miracle be lacking it must be provided. The result is a tendency to read a miraculous element into events which are in themselves capable of a normal explanation, and to find miracle where none necessarily exists. The world into which the gospel first came was almost entirely of this type, and the two narratives of the raising of the daughter of an official which have been compared with one another may suggest how the process was—without thought of deceit or of misrepresentation —carried out. It may be that the 'nature' miracles are to be explained on this ground. Men in a panic may very readily exaggerate the danger of a sudden squall, and believe themselves to be in immediate peril of drowning without adequate cause. The sense of security induced by the calmness and 'faith' of such a personality as Jesus may well produce such a revulsion of feeling that the mind passes over to the opposite extreme, and sea and sky seem at once to be calm. In other words, the miracle of the stilling of the storm may have been a complete change in the minds of the disciples rather than in the actual state of the weather. Some such explanation may be welcome to not a few devout Christian spirits to-day. Nevertheless there are still those who prefer to accept the literal accuracy of the text, and of them we can only say, with Dr. Nairne, 'Let them do so in all charity, and give thanks to God.'

V. ix. 35–x. 42 : The Mission of the Twelve

The passage well illustrates the way in which this evangelist combines his sources. The main narrative of the mission of the Twelve is taken from Mark, but with this, especially in the instructions given to the apostles, much other material is included, for which the chief source appears to be Q. The latter material appears in Luke amongst the instructions given

to the Seventy, and it is clear that Matthew has combined the two sections from these two different sources, and, since he had to attribute them both to the same event, he has omitted all mention of the number Seventy.

This is quite in accord with his purpose. Mark is concerned to give the mission of the Twelve its historic setting ; it is a part of the training of those whom Jesus, knowing that his own death would not long be postponed, had selected to carry on his work after he had been taken from them. Luke, too, has something of the historian's instinct ; he also is concerned with events, and believes that the two missions are entirely distinct, for while he puts that of the Twelve in much the same setting as does Mark, he finds that the Seventy were sent ahead of Jesus on his last journey to Jerusalem, in order to prepare the way for him. But Matthew's interest in events is only secondary. He deals primarily with the Kingdom of God, and with the church as a means of realizing it. To him it is immaterial whether the words of Jesus were uttered on the same occasion or in different circumstances ; what he sees is that they are all concerned with the conditions of evangelism, and therefore he groups them all together, that his readers may have a compact statement of the instructions given to those who go out to preach the gospel.

35 Then Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages,
teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of
the Reign, and healing every disease and complaint.
36 As he saw the crowds he was moved with pity for them ;
they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a
37 shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest
38 is rich, but the labourers are few ; so pray the Lord of
the harvest to send labourers to gather his harvest.'

These verses form the introduction to the main section. Jesus is himself engaged on an evangelistic tour through all the towns and villages, and he sees that he alone cannot meet all the needs of the people. Whatever view we hold of the Person of Christ, we are bound to admit that he was limited

by conditions of time and space—he could not be in two places at once. Hence he must use others, and delegate some at least of his powers to them. Probably it was felt in the early church that the same authority and commission were continued throughout the generations, especially to certain persons, and there would be, as long as the church endured, men who would be called upon to fulfil the conditions first laid upon these apostles. The pity of Jesus for the leaderless and scattered people is described in words taken from Mark vi. 34, where they occur as an introduction to the teaching which preceded the feeding of the five thousand. It is noticeable that whilst in the original passage the need of the people is especially for teaching, this evangelist seems to think rather of their want of physical attention. The last verse of chap. ix. is taken from the Mission of the Seventy, and is identical with Luke x. 2.

x.

And summoning his twelve disciples he gave them power 1
over unclean spirits, power to cast out and also to heal
every disease and every ailment. These are the names of 2
the twelve apostles: first Simon (who is called Peter)
and Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedaeus and
John his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and 3
Matthew the taxgatherer, James the son of Alphaeus and
Lebbaeus whose surname is Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot 4
and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

The list of the Twelve is taken from Mark iii. 12–19. Again the context is different in the two gospels. In Mark they are appointed as a direct result of the Pharisee-Herodian plot against the life of Jesus; here nothing is said about their appointment, which is assumed. This, in itself, suggests that there has been dislocation of the original order of the material. The '**twelve disciples**' are introduced in a way which makes it clear that the reader is expected to be familiar with them and with the circumstances of their appointment. Matthew (like Luke, ix. 2) adds to the exorcism mentioned in Mark iii. 15 and vi. 7 the power to heal disease. This is probably

due to the fact that the commission given to the Seventy in Q includes the cure of sickness.

The actual list is identical with that of Mark, but there are minor variations. The "surnames"—surely private and almost family nicknames given in affectionate and half-humorous reproof—of the sons of Zebedee are omitted by Matthew, while he inserts **the taxgatherer** after Matthew's name. Once more he makes it clear that he has some tradition which identified Levi the taxgatherer with the apostle Matthew. The order, too, is slightly different. Our evangelist does not say, as his source did, that the disciples were sent out in pairs, but he groups them in pairs, and so naturally puts **Andrew** next to **Simon Peter**, instead of giving him the fourth place. He also transposes **Thomas** and **Matthew.**

5 These twelve men Jesus despatched with the following instruc-
6 tions, 'Do not go among the Gentiles, and do not enter
a Samaritan town, rather make your way to the lost sheep
7 of the house of Israel. And preach as you go, tell men,
8 "The Reign of heaven is near." Heal the sick, raise the
dead, cleanse lepers, cast out daemons; give without
9 paying; as you have got without paying; you are not to
10 take gold or silver or coppers in your girdle, nor a wallet
for the road, nor two shirts, nor sandals, nor stick—the
11 workman deserves his rations. Whatever town or village
you go into, find out a deserving inhabitant and stay
with him till you leave.
12 When you enter the house, salute it;
13 if the household is deserving,
let your peace rest on it;
but if the household is undeserving,
let your peace return to you.
14 Whoever will not receive you or listen to your message, leave
that house or town and shake off the very dust from your
15 feet. I tell you truly, on the day of judgment it will be
more bearable for Sodom and Gomorra than for that town.

These verses form the commission proper, to which certain sayings about disciples are added. Matthew insists from the

start that the work of these apostles is to be confined to **Israel.** This restriction does not appear in either of the sources, and it may be remarked that there is a similar insertion in this gospel in the story of the Syrophoenician woman, where Jesus limits his own activities to Israel in terms which are almost identical with those used here. Of course Matthew is very far from being blind to the world-wide importance of the gospel, but he is writing for Jewish readers, and he seeks to make it clear that the mission of Jesus and of his apostles is primarily to Israel, and that the **Gentiles** and **Samaritans** (who should be added to the Gentiles in ver. 5) take the second place, and are included only after Israel as a people has rejected the Messiah.

The main duties of the apostles are then stated. Matthew does not copy either of his sources verbatim, and somewhat expands the list of duties, giving details where the others generalize. The list of the apostles' duties may be regarded as a summary of the activities of Jesus himself. The first is the proclamation **The Reign of heaven is near,** and if we are right in supposing that the evangelist had in view not only the original apostles but the missionaries of his own generation, we have a further illustration of the urgency of the hope of the Parousia which marked the early church. Four kinds of physical benefit are then enumerated, the **raising of the dead** is included and **the leper** is mentioned as distinct from the ordinary **sick.** It goes without saying that **casting out daemons** also stands apart. If we may judge the original form of Q from the Lucan form, the injunction was simply, **' Heal those in the town who are ill '** (Luke x. 9).

It may be asked, ' If the coming of the Kingdom was expected immediately, what was to be gained by these activities ? The dead would rise at once, the sick and the possessed would automatically be relieved of their trouble with the coming of the Messiah. Would it not have been better for the apostles to confine themselves to the plain announcement of the coming New Time, and let this do its own work ? ' The cures may be regarded as an earnest of yet greater things to come, but there is a deeper reason for

them than this. Jesus himself, through the greater part of his ministry, while he was seeking privacy for himself and for his disciples, found that his own miracles of healing proved to be one of the great obstacles to the achievement of his purpose. Yet he performed them. The truth is that neither he nor his followers could do otherwise. It was impossible either for him or for them to be indifferent to the cry of human need, to disregard the appeal of human suffering. The power to relieve it was there, and this power must be exercised. Our modern missionary societies are sometimes criticised for spending time and money over medical work, instead of concentrating on direct preaching. But it would be utterly disastrous to allow the world to think that any Christian body can possibly refrain from relieving human pain where this is possible. We have seen, not once but many times, that the value of human personality and the claims of humanity are paramount to the Christian ethic, and even if it had been absolutely certain that the world-consummation would be achieved in a few hours, it would still be incumbent on the true Christian propagandist to battle where he could with pain.

Vers. 9–15 lay down rules of guidance in practical conduct. They are taken mainly from Mark, but the instructions given to the Seventy in Q largely overlap those given to the Twelve in Mark, and they have been combined and, to some extent, modified. Thus whilst the instructions given in Mark allow of **stick** and **sandals**, Q forbids both. Whilst the carrying of bread is forbidden in Mark, it is not mentioned in Matthew, though the remark **the workman deserves his rations** (taken from Q) may be held to imply the prohibition. The injunction to **find out a deserving inhabitant** in each **town or village** is peculiar to this gospel, but the command to remain in the same house during the whole stay in each place is found in both Mark and Q, in slightly different forms. This gospel follows Mark. The **salutation** is enjoined in Q, not in Mark, and it seems that the original Aramaic, preserved through literal translation in Luke, has been paraphrased in Matthew's **if the household is deserving.** The instructions relating to a

place which will not receive . . . the message are very similar in both sources, and again Matthew follows Mark rather than Q, but the threat against the rebellious city belongs, on the other hand, to Q and not to Mark. It will be seen that the two sources have been closely intertwined by Matthew, and the impression given by the composite picture is one of great simplicity, circumspection, and urgency.

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves ; so be wise 16
like serpents and guileless like doves. Beware of men, 17
they will hand you over to sanhedrins and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be haled before governors 18
and kings for my sake—it will be a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. Now, when they bring you up for 19
trial, do not trouble yourselves about how to speak or what to say ; what you are to say will come to you at the moment, for you are not the speakers, it is the Spirit 20
of your Father that is speaking through you. Brother 21
will betray brother to death, the father will betray his child, *children will rise against their parents* and put them to death, and you will be hated by all men on account 22
of my name ; but he will be saved who holds out to the very end.
When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next ; truly 23
I tell you, you will not have covered the towns of Israel before the Son of man arrives.

This is a composite passage, which forms a warning of the persecutions which the disciples are to endure. It is clearly not immediately connected with the mission of the Twelve or of the Seventy. On the other hand, it is only too accurate a forecast of what was to befall the church in its early years, and those to whom the words were addressed had in later life abundant reason to recall them. Once more we notice that Jesus is careful to invite no man into his service, to send no man out on his business, without carefully warning him at the outset of what he may be called upon to endure.

The evangelist has collected the material from several sources. The first sentence is taken from Q (cf. Luke x. 3),

where it seems to have stood at the beginning of the commission of the Seventy. Matthew has added to it the clause warning the disciples to imitate the **serpent** and the **dove**; both similes are familiar in rabbinic phraseology, the former derived from Genesis iii. and the latter from the Song of Songs.

The main body of the section is taken from the great eschatological discourse in Mark xiii. There are a few verbal alterations, but in no case is the meaning of a sentence modified. It will be noticed that with the warning there is also comfort. It may be that persecution awaits the disciples, but there is support to meet it. The victims of ecclesiastical and civil tyranny will not stand alone, for the words in which they shall reply to their persecutors will be given to them—Mark and Luke say by the holy Spirit, Matthew **it is the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.** It is a little curious to find that a distinctively theological expression is modified in the later gospels, and we can only suppose that both were written at a time when the church had not yet formulated a doctrine of the holy Spirit, and did not even feel the need for such formulation. Truly the need only arose when the ecstatic manifestations associated with the presence of the Spirit in the primitive church had begun to die away. Men do not readily theorise about experiences which are vital to them. Perhaps the best comment on the whole section is to be found in the sufferings of the apostolic church recorded in the Acts, and in all ages it has been shewn how easily religious differences separate members of the same family.

The last verse of this section is peculiar to Matthew. It suggests the actual effect of persecution in the early history of the church. As the book of the Acts shews, it was the attack made on the Jerusalem church which sent the disciples to preach in Samaria and throughout Syria. The only result of the efforts of the enemies of the church to destroy it was an increase in extent and numbers which did not cease till the church had, nominally at least, conquered the whole world. But we may see a further principle in the words of Jesus. Whilst there may be, and often are, occasions when loyalty

to duty demands that a man should remain at his post, whatever dangers threaten him, he ought not uselessly to throw his life away, when he can be really effective in a place where it is not threatened. When they persecute him in one town, his labours may be futile ; if he flee to the next, he may find a willing audience.

A scholar is not above his teacher, 24
nor a servant above his lord ;
enough for the scholar to fare like his teacher, 25
and the servant like his lord.
If men have called the master of the house Beelzebul,
how much more will they miscall his servants !
Fear them not :— 26
nothing is veiled that shall not be revealed,
or hidden that shall not be known ;
what I tell you in the dark, you must utter in the open, 27
what you hear in a whisper you must proclaim on the housetop.
Have no fear of those who kill the body but cannot kill 28
the soul :
rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.
Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ? 29
Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unless your Father wills it.
The very hairs on your head are all numbered ; 30
fear not, then, you are worth far more than sparrows ! 31
Everyone who will acknowledge me before men. 32
I will acknowledge him before my Father in heaven ;
and whoever will disown me before men, 33
I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

This section of the teaching of Jesus is mainly derived from Q, and appears in Luke xii. 2–9. No connecting thread of thought is obvious, but the main idea may be the contrast between the attitude of the world and that of the Heavenly Father. It begins with a saying taken from Q, but from a very different context (the rest of the original passage is

preserved in vii. 1–5), and with a rather different purpose. As the context of the Lucan parallel (Luke vi. 40) shews, the original lesson is that the **scholar** cannot be expected to surpass the **teacher.** Here the lesson is that the disciple must not look for better treatment than his master, and it is reinforced by a reference to the fact that Jesus has been accused of casting out devils by diabolical agency. Once more Jesus sets before his followers the possibilities that confront them.

The rest of the section is also taken from Q, and is found in Luke xii. 2–9. Again there are interesting variations, for Luke has ' all you utter in the dark shall be heard in the light '—obviously a very different lesson. It seems that, according to our evangelist, Jesus is trying to encourage his disciples to boldness in proclaiming the truth he gives them. They hear it **in the dark** and in strict privacy, but it is for all the world, and must be fearlessly uttered **in the open** where any man may hear it. This audacity will certainly lead to persecution, and may even bring death on the speakers, but they must not be deterred by this thought. Commentators are undecided as to who it is that **can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna,** some believing that it is the Devil, others thinking that it is God. As a matter of fact we need not decide this question in order to appreciate Jesus' meaning. Whichever, whoever, whatever it may be that **destroys the soul,** it is there that the real danger lies. There is no need to be anxious or frightened about physical dangers—and that is all that persecution at its worst can threaten ; the disciples' **fear** should be reserved for spiritual perils. Anything which can injure a man's spiritual life is far more terrible than that which harms his physical being. In any case the disciple may be assured of one thing : no physical harm can come to him without the knowledge and, perhaps, the acquiescence of his Father. A string of **sparrows** is **sold** in the market—alive they are insignificant chattering little nuisances, dead they are the cheapest form of animal food—God, their creator, knows all about each one. But to men He is more than creator, He is **Father,** and they **are worth far more than sparrows.** So much the greater is His interest in their fate.

If they fall, they may know at least that their loving Father is not indifferent to their fate, and that no physical happening like death can in any way interfere with their relation to Him.

But how is that relationship to be maintained? Jesus gives the answer in the last two verses of the section. It depends on their attitude toward himself. If the disciple is prepared, in spite of everything, to cling to and **acknowledge** his friendship for Jesus, then that friendship will carry him past death, and will serve him in the eternal presence of God. If, on the other hand, a man shrinks from the consequences of being openly associated with Jesus, then the protection will fail him, and in the presence of God he will in turn be **disowned.** The relation between Christ and his follower is necessarily mutual. There are obligations and responsibilities on both sides. This is not an arbitrary enactment or a piece of vindictive retribution. It is not simply as a reward for fidelity that Jesus promises to **acknowledge**, nor as a punishment for faithlessness that he threatens to **disown.** It is in the nature of things that a man cannot be on both sides at once. If he belongs to Jesus, is one of his friends, holds a place in his company, then it follows that he will admit and even claim his position. If he fails, then by that very act he excludes himself from the divine community whose essential bond is a common love and loyalty to Christ.

Do not imagine I have come to bring peace on earth; 34
I have not come to bring peace but a sword.
I have come to set a man *against his father,* 35
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
yes, *a man's own household will be his enemies.* 36
He who loves father or mother more than me 37
is not worthy of me;
he who loves son or daughter more than me
is not worthy of me:
he who will not take his cross and follow after me 38
is not worthy of me.
He who has found his life will lose it 39

and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.
40 He who receives you receives me,
and he who receives me receives Him who sent me.
41 He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet,
will receive a prophet's reward ;
he who receives a good man because he is good,
will receive a good man's reward.
42 And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of
cold water because he is a disciple,
I tell you, he shall not lose his reward.'

The discourse concludes with a miscellaneous collection of sayings which seem to be derived from different sources, but all spring from the thought of the conflicts which the introduction of the Kingdom will produce. The first three verses resemble a passage which occurs in Luke xii. 51–53, though the differences in wording are so great as to suggest that the two evangelists were not drawing on exactly the same literary source. A similar thought has already been expressed in ver. 21, which also speaks of divisions produced by the gospel. It was, of course, a regular characteristic of the beginning of the messianic era that there should be wars, and the thought of family divisions was familiar from Micah vii. 6, the verse quoted here. It may be remarked that the citation is somewhat loose, but, especially in the last clause, appears to be rather nearer to the Hebrew than the LXX. The very strong term to bring (literally ' to fling ') peace is found in rabbinic phraseology. It is only too true that the effect of the Gospel, especially in non-Christian countries, has often been to cause family divisions. As always, Jesus insists that loyalty to him, and to God through him, is so powerful and exercises so strong a claim as to override all else.

A common experience of Christ is more binding than the closest ties of human relationship, and must take precedence of them. This is emphasized in ver. 37, which is a weakened interpretation of the terribly hard saying in Luke xiv. 26. Whilst it is true that the Matthean form of the saying will more readily find acceptance, yet it has to be acknowledged

that there are circumstances in which men have to act as though they hated their closest relatives. Perhaps it is only on the Indian mission-field that the force of the saying can be fully realized, but there, even to this day, a convert has to leave his home and his family, and die to them. To them it often seems as though he must hate them. But it is not alone the relatives of the disciple who have to suffer. Crucifixion lies before the man himself, and it behoves him to go out on his journey with a cross on his shoulder. That he will need sooner or later, and from the start it will be well for him to grow accustomed to the emblem and instrument of criminal execution.

This leads to one of the greatest of the sayings of Jesus. In a slightly different form ver. 39 appears also in Mark viii. 35 (= Matthew xvi. 25, Luke ix. 24) amongst the conditions laid down by Jesus for his followers immediately after the recognition of his messiahship by Peter. That the same lesson was contained in Q seems clear from its presence also in Luke xvii. 33, where it occurs in one of the eschatological discourses. It is thus one of those few sayings for which there is a genuine double attestation. This is one of the verses whose meaning must be traced back to the original Aramaic if it is to be understood. The Greek word variously rendered in our English versions as 'soul' or 'life' is a translation of an Aramaic word which might have either or both of these meanings, but, with a possessive pronoun after it, almost invariably means 'self.' It is, in fact, the Aramaic equivalent of a reflexive pronoun. So, to his hearers, the words of Jesus meant, he whose aim has been to save himself shall lose himself, and he who loses himself for my sake will find himself. This lies at the root of the moral teaching of Jesus. It is only when a man has forgotten himself, has ceased to take any notice of himself, has allowed his own interests to be wholly absorbed in some external object, that he does in truth begin to live in the full sense of the word. Self-realization is only to be attained fully through self-abnegation.

This loss of self, and consequent identification with Jesus, has a further effect in its bearing on the relations of men to

one another. The disciple is now so far identified with his Lord, and the Lord with his Father, that, to use Johannine language, they are in him and he in his Father. All are one, and are bound together by a kind of ethical continuity. So what is done to one is done to all, anything administered to one end of the chain reaches right through the whole. Men see themselves acting on a disciple alone, but the truth is that through him they are acting on Jesus, and through Jesus on his Father. This is finally illustrated by a word which is found in Mark ix. 41, and is there linked up with the incident of the child set in the midst. If that be the original context, then probably there has been some modification or reapplication of the saying, for clearly here the little ones are, according to Aramaic usage, disciples or scholars. It is to be noted that Jesus insists that the giver must know what he is doing if he is to reap his reward. This is quite in harmony with the ordinary rabbinic position, that no religious act is of value unless it be performed 'with intention.' Jesus was quite at one with the best spirits in Judaism when he asserted that the motive was more than the act, and, indeed, that the latter took its spiritual value from the former.

VI. xi. 1–xii. 50 : Jesus and his Jewish Public

The injunctions have been given privately to the Twelve, and Jesus is now free to resume his public ministry. We have now, for the first time in this gospel, an account in some detail of the teaching Jesus had to give to the crowds. Hitherto his lessons have been intended for his own disciples, except where they have arisen directly out of one of his miracles. Now he speaks to all men, and it is clear that this direct contact will at once produce conflict. The reaction of the Jewish nation as a whole to Jesus was hostile, and one task that lay before the evangelist was to shew how this came about.

xi.

1 After finishing these instructions to his twelve disciples, Jesus removed from there to teach and preach among their towns.

2 Now when John heard in prison what the Christ was doing, he

sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the Coming One? 3
Or are we to look out for someone else?' Jesus answered 4
them, 'Go and report to John what you hear and see:
the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf 5
hear, and the dead are raised. And blessed is he who is 6
repelled by nothing in me!' As the disciples of John 7
went away, Jesus proceeded to speak to the crowds about
John:

'What did you go out to the desert to see?
A reed swayed by the wind?
Come, what did you go out to see? 8
A man arrayed in soft raiment?
The wearers of soft raiment are in royal palaces.
Come, why did you go out? 9
To see a prophet?
Yes, I tell you, and far more than a prophet.
This is he of whom it is written. 10
Here I send my messenger before your face
to prepare the way for you.

I tell you truly, no one has arisen among the sons of women 11
who is greater than John the Baptist, and yet the least in
the Realm of heaven is greater than he is. From the 12
days of John the Baptist till now the Realm of heaven
suffers violence, and the violent press into it. For all the 13
prophets and the law prophesied of it until John:—if you 14
care to believe it, he is the Elijah who is to come. He 15
who has an ear, let him listen to this.
But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children 16
sitting in the market place, who call to their playmates,
"We piped to you and you would not dance, 17
we lamented and you would not beat your breasts."
For John has come neither eating nor drinking, 18
and men say, "He has a devil";
the Son of man has come eating and drinking, 19
and men say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard,
a friend of taxgathers and sinners!"
Nevertheless, Wisdom is vindicated by all that she does.'

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WCIU

This section is taken from Q, and tells of the attitude of Jesus and John the Baptist to one another. The Lucan form (vii. 18–35) appears longer, but the difference is due to the fact that Matthew has compressed the introductory and connecting narrative portions, discarding several sentences as superfluous, and modifying others. As far as the words of Jesus himself are concerned, there is almost compete identity. In no passage is there closer agreement between the two evangelists who have preserved Q for us. Each of the two, however, inserts a few independent verses after ver. 11. Matthew's addition (vers. 12–15) emphasizes the function of John as the forerunner of the Messiah, while that of Luke (vii. 29 f.) describes the effect of the preceding words on the Pharisees and the Lawyers.

The passage is introduced with an embassy from John to Jesus. It has been doubted whether the Baptist sent his disciples for his own sake or for theirs. On the one hand, it is very possible that he had been expecting a catastrophic revelation of the Messiah, and while many of the acts of Jesus suggested that he was the Christ, yet his failure to carry the matter through as popular eschatology expected roused suspicion in many minds—not least in that of John. On the other hand, it is suggested that John himself had no doubt about Jesus, but that he wished his own disciples to come into direct contact with him and to be convinced that this was really the Messiah, in spite of much that seemed to point away from him.

The answer of Jesus is preceded in Luke by the statement that Jesus performed a number of miracles in the sight of the messengers. The absence of these sentences in this gospel, however, makes no difference to the point of Jesus' reply. These men are to judge for themselves, to go and report to John (and it seems as if Jesus adopted the former of the two views mentioned in the last paragraph), and let the facts speak to him for themselves. It may be that some of the phenomena which men associated with the coming of the Messiah are lacking, but John should at least know that Jesus was possessed of abnormal powers,

and that those powers were used wholly for the good of mankind.

Vers. 7–11 give us the best picture of John that we have. He stands out as a rugged, fearless, sturdy hero, with the independence and inspiration of a prophet. He was a conspicuous figure in his own day, and made a lasting impression on his contemporaries, if only because of the striking contrast between him and other leaders of men in his time. They had claimed —or most of them—to be themselves the saviours of their people; John had been satisfied to prepare the way for another. This Jesus recognizes and emphasizes, applying to John the verse from Malachi always recognized as foretelling the advent of a messenger of the Christ.

It is here that John was more than a prophet, not in nature or in inspiration, but in function. The whole course of history is oriented to the coming of the Messiah and the inauguration of the Kingdom of heaven. From the earliest days Israel has been steadily moving towards that goal, and the prophets have had their part in the work. To the Jewish mind of Jesus' day, their duty had been to foretell the coming of the Messiah, though that lay still in the distant future. In a sense they all prepared the way for the new time, but the long story reached its climax in John, who could say that the Christ was actually at hand, and that men then living would see his coming. It was as if the whole of the spiritual history of his people culminated in him, and the old order had reached the point where it was to give place to a new world. Yet John himself belonged to the old world, not to the new, and so, though he was the greatest product of Jewish history, there were yet greater things in store. For the coming spiritual world-order was on so much higher a plane than that which was passing away that its base stood higher than the other's summit.

We are inevitably reminded of the Pauline doctrine of a new creation, a new plane of being, a new dimension added to the range of human experience. It is no discredit to the men of the old order to say that they had not attained to the greatest heights. Till the Christ came these heights were

naturally beyond them. Humanity had been like some amphibious animal in its larval, aquatic stage. Now gills are exchanged for lungs, and the lowest and feeblest of the air-breathing creatures rises far above the noblest of those whose lives must be lived in the water. He that is least in the Realm of heaven is greater than he is.

Ver. 12 (which appears again in Luke xvi. 16 in a modified form) has always given commentators difficulty. It has been suggested that it simply illustrates the eagerness of men to enter the Kingdom, or that it refers to the persecutions which the early Christians had to endure. Neither of these is satisfactory, and the most probable explanation seems to be that the words suffers violence are a reference to the numerous attempts made by revolutionary Jews to establish a national government by force. They believed that only so could the Kingdom of heaven come in the world, and they were convinced, in spite of repeated failure, that if they did their part, God would interfere in miraculous ways. The verse then becomes a condemnation of the false methods and mistaken ideals of the Kingdom, against which Jesus had to protest not only through his life, but even in his very death. Vers. 13 f. are an expansion of the main subject of the discourse, and ver. 15 is a phrase which was frequently on the lips of Jesus, urging his hearers to give their serious attention to what he had to say.

The parable of the children sitting in the market-place is too familiar and too obvious to need further elaboration, but the closing sentence is one of considerable difficulty. The Lucan parallel has ' Wisdom is vindicated by all her children,' and there is some ground for believing that this was the original reading here. On the other hand, it may well be that in some of our most ancient witnesses to the text the saying here has been accommodated to the Lucan form. If by all that she does be the true reading here, then two explanations are possible. The first (and on the whole the less probable) is that the works of Wisdom are the faithless Jews who imagine themselves to be supremely wise, and that the preposition means not by but ' against '—a quite possible

interpretation of the Aramaic phrase which must lie behind the Greek. On the other hand, it has been plausibly maintained that this verse forms no part of the speech of Jesus, but is comment based on the experience of the church. Wisdom—and this is probably true on either interpretation —is the personified agent and power of God, identified by the theology of the church with Jesus himself. He is attacked and slandered for his actions during his earthly ministry, but the course of time shews that he and he alone was right. There is, as it were, a legal case between him and his opponents, and it is only the verdict of history that can settle the matter. This is given clearly and without hesitation in favour of him, and he is seen to be that true and divine Wisdom.

Then he proceeded to upbraid the towns where his many 20
miracles had been performed, because they would not
repent. 'Woe to you, Khorazin! Woe to you, Beth- 21
saida! Had the miracles performed in you been per-
formed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long
ago in sackcloth and ashes. I tell you this, it will be 22
more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment
than for you. And you, O Capharnahum! *Exalted to* 23
heaven? No, you will sink to Hades!—for if the miracles
performed in you had been performed in Sodom, Sodom
would have lasted to this day. I tell you, it will be more 24
bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.'

This denunciation of the towns where his many miracles had been performed appears in Luke immediately after the mission of the Seventy. That is to say, Jesus is already on his last journey to Jerusalem, and will return to these places no more. They have lost their last chance. Once more, however, the historical setting is not a matter of importance to Matthew, and he appends it to another passage in which the rejection of Jesus is brought out. The Lucan form is somewhat the shorter, and it is possible that Matthew has expanded the saying in order to make it more symmetrical. It certainly seems that he has taken the final remark about Sodom (and Gomorrah) from its Lucan position at the head of

these verses and transposed it to the end. It is clear that in his copy of Q it stood at the head (or rather at the end of the preceding section), because he used it, along with the remainder of the instructions given to the Seventy, in compiling his little manual for Apostles in chap. x. Of the cities mentioned we have no other reference to **Khorazin**, though its site is identified as being a few miles from **Capernaum**. Probably its inhabitants would have been surprised if they could have known that their only claim to memory lay in the fact that they had refused to accept Jesus. It is clear that, in the eyes of this evangelist, the power to **perform miracles** should have carried a full conviction. Here he probably represents the feeling of his time. That a man should be able to do what others could neither do nor explain seemed to the ancient world a proof that he had a superhuman power. God made the laws of nature, God alone, therefore, could override them. He who could act in defiance of the normal must have some unusual connexion with God. But these cities had refused to accept this point of view, and had thereby shewn themselves on a lower spiritual level than even the great wicked heathen cities of the present and of the past.

25 At that time Jesus spoke and said, 'I praise thee, Father,
Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding all this from the
wise and learned and revealing it to the simpleminded;
26 yes, Father, I praise thee that such was thy chosen pur-
pose.
27 All has been handed over to me by my Father;
and no one knows the Son except the Father—
nor does anyone know the Father except the Son,
and he to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

The passage is taken from Q, and appears in Luke x. 21 f. There this exultant outburst is called forth by the return of the successful Seventy, and the context explains the passage. They are to be congratulated because, simpleminded and untrained as they are, they have yet fathomed secrets that many prophets and kings have sought in vain to understand. This seems to be the only place in the Synoptic Gospels in

which Jesus expressly claims that unique relation to God which is so strongly emphasized in the Fourth Gospel. The words form a lyrical, ecstatic utterance, and whether the Lucan context be the right one or not, it seems hardly likely that Matthew has given us the original setting. It is difficult to suppose that Jesus thought of the ruin to fall on cities which had rejected him as the great mystery whose revelation to the simpleminded called for such rejoicing. It is rather the whole purpose of his coming that we must read into the all this. No man could possibly guess, nor could any process of reasoning discover, the great things that God has to give man. They can only be made known by being revealed. There is much that may be learnt both before and after that special communication of divine truth, but the essential thing, whether it come home to the simpleton or to the sage, can only be reached through direct contact with God. And Jesus feels himself to be the intermediary. To him all has been handed over, and so none really knows him save He who made him what he was. There is, further, no other channel by which men may attain to complete and perfect knowledge of God. Jesus thus occupies a unique position, for on him depends the spiritual life of the whole of humanity. Whilst it is true that it is only here in the Synoptic Gospels that such a position is adopted, yet when we look deeper we shall see that some such claim underlies Jesus' conception of the meaning and purpose of his own death.

Come to me, all who are labouring and burdened, 28
and I will refresh you.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, 29
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and *you will find your souls refreshed;*
my yoke is kindly and my burden light.' 30

Whilst there is, unfortunately, no reason to believe that Jesus actually spoke these words immediately after those recorded in vers. 25–27, it is impossible not to feel that there is some inner connexion between them. He has a unique power and authority; he is, as it were, the sole repository

of the whole resources of an infinite God, and so he is able to make an appeal and an offer to labouring and burdened humanity. All men have yokes to bear, all have burdens to carry. There is no need to limit this to any particular type or class of toil or weariness—some, for instance, would think of the burden of the Law laid on the Jew by the scribe, and perhaps there may be a reference to this type of load in the appeal to learn from Jesus, but on the whole we are bound to assume that the invitation is wider. Since no man can be free from yoke and burden, since he must learn from someone, Jesus offers himself and his control, for that men will find the most bearable of all.

xii.

1 At that time Jesus walked one sabbath through the cornfields,
and as his disciples were hungry they started to pull some
2 ears of corn and eat them. When the Pharisees noticed it,
they said to him, 'Look at your disciples, they are doing
3 what is not allowed on the sabbath.' He replied, 'Have
you not read what David did when he and his men were
4 hungry, how he went into the house of God, and there they
ate *the loaves of the Presence* which neither he nor his men
5 were allowed to eat, but only the priests? Have you not
read in the Law that the priests in the temple are not
6 guilty when they desecrate the sabbath? I tell you, One
7 is here who is greater than the temple. Besides, if you
had known what this meant, *I care for mercy not for sacrifice,* you would not have condemned men who are
8 not guilty. For the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath.'

The evangelist now returns to the main thread of Mark, and takes one or two illustrations of the conflict which arose between Jesus and the Pharisees. A good deal has been written in recent years about the Pharisees, and we understand them and sympathize with them better to-day than earlier generations have done. We can see that there is much in them and in their teaching which corresponds somewhat closely with the actual teaching of Jesus, and from time to time students have had difficulty in understanding why it

was that Jesus set himself against them. But the truth is that it was not he who opposed them, but they who opposed him, and the reason for their attitude is to be found in such events as this. The narrative is, of course, based on that of Mark (ii. 23–28), but has been expanded. In Mark the only illustration which Jesus uses to defend his disciples is that of David ; here we have added the example of the priests in the temple, who 'work' on the Sabbath, and were permitted to do so, on the principle that the greater precept may override the less if there be any conflict of duties between them. It is this principle that underlies both the answers of Jesus. On the one hand, he himself is present, and though he has not received any direct benefit from the breach of the Law of the Sabbath (and the action of the disciples was a breach of the Law ; of that there can be no doubt), yet his mere presence means that all lesser authority is suspended, and all other authority, he claims, is less than his own. He is greater than the temple. It is not difficult to see how this must have aroused the hostility of the Pharisees, even if they had been friendly up to this point.

But Jesus has other claims to advance, as well as his own. He is concerned for the interests of humanity. This is obvious even from the Marcan form of the narrative, but it is reinforced by the quotation from Hosea—which may be an explanatory note added by the evangelist here. Once more, the most important thing in the whole universe is personality, and no law, however lofty be its origin, can really represent the divine will if it conflicts with the satisfaction of the real needs of humanity. Just as the priests in their temple service are not guilty, so the disciples are not guilty (the same word is used both in ver. 5 and in ver. 7) when they satisfy their natural hunger. This the Pharisees would have admitted themselves if they had really understood the fundamental and supreme principle expressed in the quotation from Hosea.

Then he moved on from there and went into their synagogue. 9
Now a man with a withered hand was there ; so in order 10
to get a charge against him they asked him, 'Is it right

11 to heal on the sabbath?' He said to them, 'Is there a man of you with one sheep, who will not catch hold of it
12 and lift it out of a pit on the sabbath, if it falls in? And how much more is a man worth than a sheep? Thus it is
13 right to do a kindness on the sabbath.' Then he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out,
14 and it was quite restored, as sound as the other. So the Pharisees withdrew and plotted against him, to destroy him.

In Mark this event is the last of a series quoted as illustrating the growth of pharisaic hostility to Jesus, and drives them to the extreme step of plotting with their bitterest enemies, the Herodians, to destroy Jesus. It is significant of the methods of this evangelist that, whilst he is not greatly interested in the historical development of events, he retains the significant clause at the end of the passage, though he fails to remark its most striking feature, namely, that it was the Herodians whom the Pharisees had to call to their aid. He also eliminates the words attributed to Jesus in his source—'Is it right to help or to hurt on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?'—and substitutes another saying. This seems to be taken from Q. Luke xiv. 1–6 tells us that Jesus was eating in the house of a chief ruler of the Pharisees, and that, though it was the Sabbath, he healed a man suffering from dropsy, at the same time issuing a definite challenge as to whether it was right to heal on the Sabbath. To this question he received no answer, and, after healing the man, gave an illustration of his principle, which is so much like that given here (the chief difference is that Luke has 'an ox or a son' instead of a sheep) that it is difficult to believe in an independent origin. It seems that, as elsewhere, Matthew has 'telescoped' two narratives, one of them taken from Mark, the other from Q. The passage serves once more to reinforce the lesson of Jesus that human personality is the most valuable thing in the world in God's eyes.

15 But as Jesus knew of it he retired from the spot. Many fol-
16 lowed him, and he healed them all, charging them strictly

not to make him known—it was for the fulfilment of what had been said by the prophet Isaiah,

Here is my servant whom I have selected, 18
my Beloved in whom my soul delights;
I will invest him with my Spirit,
and he will proclaim religion to the Gentiles.
He will not wrangle or shout, 19
no one will hear his voice in the streets.
He will not break the bruised reed, 20
he will not put out the smouldering flax,
till he carries religion to victory:
and the Gentiles will hope in his name. 21

In accordance with his general principles, the evangelist seeks to explain or illustrate a feature in the life of Jesus by reference to the Old Testament. He compresses the substance of Mark iii. 7–12 into a couple of sentences, and then turns to his explanation. An ordinary messianic claimant might have been expected to advertise himself and his work, to challenge publicity, and even to attempt some active political movement. Why does Jesus thus seem to accept the situation and withdraw into comparative privacy? That he did so as a result of pharisaic hostility is clear from the Marcan narrative, but this evangelist seeks the reason in prophecy, and finds that it was for the fulfilment of what had been said by the prophet Isaiah in one of the great 'Servant' passages. It is interesting to note that his language has no relation whatever to the LXX. It is a free rendering of a Hebrew text, which seems to have differed in a few details from that handed down to us. The passage is well chosen, for it serves to bring out one of the great differences between Jesus and his contemporaries. They could think only of a spectacular and triumphant Messiah. Jesus, as the story of his early temptation shews us, had faced the issue from the first. He had definitely and finally cast on one side the thought that the Kingdom of God could come through those methods by which earthly dynasties are usually established. His must be the way of comparative insignificance, of steady but sure penetra-

tion from below. He will not wrangle or shout, no one will hear his voice in the streets. And whilst we have no right to assume that the evangelist, like the modern Old Testament critic, closely associated Isaiah xlii. and Isaiah liii., yet it must have been clear from the first that the course Jesus had chosen must in the end lead to his being 'despised and rejected of men,' persecuted and slain. His way was inevitably the way of the Cross.

22 Then a blind and dumb demoniac was brought to him, and he
23 healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw. And
all the crowds were amazed; they said, 'Can this be the
24 Son of David?' But when the Pharisees heard of it
they said, 'This fellow only casts out daemons by Beelzebul
25 the prince of daemons.' As Jesus knew what they were
thinking, he said to them,

'Any realm divided against itself comes to ruin,
any city or house divided against itself will never stand;
26 and if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself;
how then can his realm stand?
27 Besides, if I cast out daemons by Beelzebul,
by whom do your sons cast them out?
Thus they will be your judges,
28 But if I cast out daemons by the Spirit of God,
then the Reign of God has reached you already.

29 Why, how can anyone enter the strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first of all binds the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

30 He who is not with me is against me,
and he who does not gather with me scatters.
31 I tell you therefore, men will be forgiven any sin and blasphemy,
but they will not be forgiven for blaspheming the Spirit.
32 Whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven,
but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will never be forgiven,
neither in this world nor in the world to come.

It would seem that we have here a group of sayings which was found both in Mark and in Q. It is a striking fact that, whilst Matthew and Luke agree fairly closely in reporting the actual words of Jesus, both differ from Mark, and assign the sayings to another context, though it must be admitted that our evangelist has at times assimilated his language to that of Mark. Evidently Mark and Q were very much alike here, and the two later evangelists failed to grasp the historical connexion in their source. In the Second Gospel the charge that Jesus casts out daemons by Beelzebul the prince of the daemons is the Jerusalem scribes' interpretation of a defence offered by the family of Jesus : ' He is not quite sane, and will be quite harmless if only we can put him under restraint.' But it seemed more natural to both the later evangelists that this charge should be based—as it seems to have been in Q—on an actual cure.

To the evangelist the unique power of Jesus in exorcism was a proof of his Messiahship. He believes, therefore, that the wonder of the crowds will have led them to the same conclusion, and adds to the account which we have in Luke (xi. 14–22) the question Can this be the Son of David ? This gives a fuller explanation of what follows. The Pharisees hear the remark and feel that at all costs they must counteract this opinion. Therefore they go to the extreme of ascribing the powers of Jesus to the prince of the daemons.

Jesus has four remarks to make upon this charge. Two of these are found both in Mark and in Q, one in Mark alone, and one in Q alone. The first is that Satan is not so foolish as to work and fight against himself. We note that Jesus spoke of a personal Devil in just the same way as did his contemporaries. The question has been discussed a good deal in recent years, and there are wide differences of opinion. It is probably a mistake to quote the ' authority ' of Jesus for or against the doctrine. The existence of moral evil is beyond dispute, and the precise form in which it is described is, comparatively speaking, unimportant. Even if Jesus had adopted the view of the earlier portions of the Old Testament, where Satan is certainly not the ' Devil,' we may be sure that

he would have used the language and thought-shape which would best convey his meaning to his audience. *They* certainly concentrated the supreme power of evil in a single personality, and in this, as in all other unessentials, he used their speech. It may also be argued that the very conditions of the Incarnation carried him no further in matters of this kind than those who were about him, and that his conscious mind accepted the popular opinion. But in any case the argument he uses to the Pharisees is equally valid. If evil, whether personal or not, is divided against itself, then it is self-destructive, and must soon fail.

The second comment is a reference to the familiar practices of the ordinary exorcists. If his power to cast out devils is of Satanic origin, there is no reason to suppose that others derive their authority from a better source, and they will all rise up and insist that it is only through goodness that evil can be defeated. But this is not all. This conquest of the powers of evil, so much more complete and authoritative than that of the ordinary exorcist, should prove to any thinking person that the Spirit of God himself was at work, and that His Reign had already begun. There is a hint in the verb used by Jesus that the Reign has not merely reached men, but that it has come suddenly, before they were prepared for it, and has caught them unawares. They professed to be looking and waiting for it, but their faces were turned in the wrong direction, and they have missed its appearance.

This thought is still further developed in the next remark of Jesus. He pictures Satan as a strong man, a powerful brigand who has stored up in his castle spoil and prisoners. There is only one way of recovering and of releasing them. The brigand himself must be defeated and overcome, and the very fact that some of the prisoners are now free proves that Satan has been bound. Here the evangelist appends from Q a word of Jesus which occurs in Mark ix. 40 in a very different context. There are only two sides in the battle of life, and every man is, whether he seeks it or no, on one or the other. He must either be with Jesus or against him ; there can be no half-measures and no 'sitting on the fence.' The

metaphor seems to be taken from the collecting of sheep, and is clearly a warning to the Pharisees. If they oppose Jesus, then they are ranging themselves on the side of that very power which he is conquering through his casting out of devils.

Finally, Jesus utters—this gospel has the saying in a somewhat expanded form—one of his strongest condemnations. The only Spirit that can cast out devils is manifestly the holy Spirit. To call this evil is to confuse all moral and spiritual issues, to identify God with Satan. This is an attitude which makes a return to God, a genuine repentance, impossible, and in no circumstances can he who is guilty of it be forgiven. It forms a barrier which even the love of God cannot overcome ; it is a sin, not in the sphere of time, but in that of eternity.

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, 33
or make the tree rotten and its fruit rotten ;
for the tree is known by its fruit.
You brood of vipers, how can you speak good when you 34
are evil ?
For the mouth utters what the heart is full of.
The good man brings good out of his good store, 35
and the evil man brings evil out of his store of evil.
I tell you, men will have to account on the day of judgment for 36
every light word they utter ;
for by your words you will be acquitted, 37
and by your words you will be condemned.

The centre of this passage is ver. 35, a saying taken from Q, and included by Luke in chap. vi. (ver. 45). The rest of that passage is paralleled in the Sermon on the Mount, and it is difficult to say what the original context was. Neither evangelist, as a rule, breaks up the speeches which he finds in his sources, and this may have been an isolated saying for which each found a different context. The section begins with a metaphor which seems to have been a favourite with Jesus, that of the tree and its fruit. In Matthew vii. this is applied to a man's actions, here it is applied to his words. The principle is the same, and once more we note one of the

distinguishing features of the teaching of Jesus. The old view—not altogether abandoned even to-day—was that there was something essentially evil or good in the spoken word itself. It 'escaped the barrier of the lips,' and went out to do its work in the world. Therefore, whatever thoughts a man might cherish in his heart, he must be careful not to allow them to take external form in uttered speech. Until that happened there was little or no danger to anyone.

But Jesus takes a different view. Evil words are only a symptom; they are not a disease, and are, therefore, of minor importance. They may be harmful, but the source of the trouble is not in the words themselves, but in the spirit which produces them. It is for this reason that the light words are so important. When a man knows that he is receiving the special attention of an audience, when he is trying to produce a definite impression on their minds, when he is making a set speech for a special occasion, he will be careful, and it does not at all follow that his words represent his real feeling or nature. He is necessarily, to some extent, playing a part, and may not be his true self. It is when he speaks without premeditation and without consciousness of his audience that he expresses the truth about himself, and it is just the casual talk and the occasional exclamation which are properly self-revealing. They give the instinctive reaction of the soul to a particular stimulus, and it is the man, not the words, which, in the sight of God, stands acquitted or condemned.

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, 'Teacher,
39 we would like to have some Sign from you.' He replied to them,
'It is an evil and disloyal generation that craves a Sign,
but no Sign will be given to it except the Sign of the prophet Jonah;
40 for as Jonah *was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale,*
so the Son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The men of Ninive will rise at the judgment with this 41
generation and condemn it ;
for when Jonah preached they did repent,
and here is One greater than Jonah.
The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with 42
this generation and condemn it ;
for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the
wisdom of Solomon,
and here is One greater than Solomon.

This passage seems to be taken from Q (cf. Luke xi. 29–32), but has been somewhat modified by the evangelist. The most important of the changes is the introduction of ver. 40, which offers an explanation of the **Sign of the prophet Jonah.** It may be seriously doubted whether Jesus actually used the words ascribed to him in this verse. They are absent from the Lucan parallel, and as a prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus they are inaccurate. For whilst the period from the Friday evening to the Sunday morning might quite well be described, according to Jewish usage, as three days, it could not by any stretch of language be called **three days and three nights.** We must regard the verse as an explanation offered by the evangelist, who was anxious to use another verse from the Old Testament in proof of his general contention that the whole history of Jesus had previously been written by the prophets.

The real point of the reference comes out clearly in both recensions of the passage. The history of Israel told of two occasions on which foreigners living in distant lands—Nineveh and South Arabia—had been impressed by Hebrew men of God. One of these was Jonah, who was possessed by the prophetic spirit, and the other Solomon, who, more than any other hero of the past, was distinguished for his endowment of divine **wisdom.** The strangers had admitted the authority and presence of the true God with these men ; here was **One greater than** they, and yet his own people failed to recognize him and to give him that respect and credence which should have been offered to him. The idea that the righteous

should sit as assessors with God at the judgment of the wicked was familiar to Jewish thought, and finds expression again in Matthew xix. 28, where the disciples are promised thrones of judgment in the great Day.

43 When an unclean spirit leaves a man, it roams through dry
44 places in search of refreshment and finds none. Then it says, "I will go back to the house I left," and when it comes it finds the house vacant, clean, and all in order.
45 Then it goes off to fetch seven other spirits worse than itself; they go in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. This is how it will be with the present evil generation.'

One of the chief weaknesses of the ancient exorcism lay in the fact that it seldom effected a permanent cure. Jesus is simply describing (and the passage is peculiar to this gospel) what happened only too often, and describing it in the familiar language of his day. For a time the patient might seem to be better, and an attack might be long postponed, but sooner or later it was liable to recur with renewed violence, the unclean spirit would come back, and every relapse was more difficult to treat than the last. To-day we see in the words of Jesus a warning that whenever evil is expelled from man, care must be taken not to leave his life empty. The vacancy must be filled, and filled with good, or evil will once more recover its power. But we may doubt whether such an application would occur to the minds of the original hearers of the words. To them it was merely an account of phenomena which were only too familiar, and carried with it a terrible condemnation of contemporary Judaism. Jesus says, in effect, that they are diabolically possessed, and even if they are for a time relieved, yet sooner or later the trouble will return with increased force, and bring about the total ruin of the nation.

46 He was still speaking to the crowds when his mother and
brothers came and stood outside; they wanted to speak
48 to him. But he replied to the man who told him this,

'Who is my mother? and who are my brothers?'
Stretching out his hand towards his disciples he said, 49
'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does 50
the will of my Father in heaven, that is my brother and sister and mother.'

After various digressions illustrating the teaching of Jesus, the evangelist returns to the Marcan narrative. There seems to be no particular reason, from his special point of view, why this passage should be introduced just here, and it is clear that he is simply resuming the order of his source. Whilst in Mark the incident follows directly on the charge of casting out devils by Beelzebul, and, indeed, forms part of the same incident, here the connexion is lost; Matthew is not interested in the historical link between the two. He is, however, concerned to bring out the claims of the new order which Jesus is founding. Its demands are so strong that it will override every other tie. He has laid it down more than once that a man, to follow him, must be prepared to abandon every other interest, and, if need be, break every other chain. He himself is prepared to submit to and to illustrate the same rule. But whilst the breaking up of the old order is a necessary preliminary, it is only a means to an end. A new order is to come into being, and this will be based, not on natural or physical ties and connexions, but on a unity of spirit, aim, and purpose. Under the old regime the closest of all links have been those of blood; the new Kingdom is to bind men and women together just as closely, but their unifying force is now their whole-hearted adherence to the will of the Father in heaven. It is His Kingdom that they seek, and that Kingdom means doing His will.

VII. Chap. xiii.: A Collection of Parables

Chap. xiii. makes, as it were, a fresh start. One of the results of pharisaic hostility noted in Mark is a change in the method of teaching used by Jesus when speaking to the large crowds, and the use of parable in these circumstances rather than direct instruction. Matthew, of course, is not interested

in the historical significance of this change, but he is concerned with its theological importance, and therefore gives the section immediately after the attempt of Jesus' friends to see him, but with the addition of other material which he did not derive from Mark.

xiii.

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and seated himself
2 by the seaside; but, as great crowds gathered to him,
he entered a boat and sat down, while all the crowd stood
3 on the beach. He spoke at some length to them in
4 parables saying: 'A sower went out to sow, and as he
sowed some seeds fell on the road and the birds came and
5 ate them up. Some other seeds fell on stony soil where
they had not much earth, and shot up at once because
6 they had no depth of soil; but when the sun rose they got
scorched and withered away because they had no root.
7 Some other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns
8 sprang up and choked them. Some other seeds fell on
good soil and bore a crop, some a hundredfold, some
9 sixty, and some thirtyfold. He who has an ear, let him
listen to this.'
10 Then the disciples came up and said to him, 'Why do you
11 speak in parables?' He replied, 'Because it is granted
you to understand the open secrets of the Realm of heaven,
but it is not granted to these people.

12 For he who has, to him shall more be given and richly given,
but whoever has not, from him shall be taken even what he has.

13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because for all their
seeing they do not see and for all their hearing they do not
14 hear or understand. In their case the prophecy of Isaiah
is being fulfilled:

You will hear and hear but never understand,
you will see and see but never perceive.
15 *For the heart of this people is obtuse,*

their ears are heavy of hearing,
their eyes they have closed,
lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
lest they understand with their heart and turn again, and
I cure them.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, 16
and your ears, for they hear !
I tell you truly, many prophets and good men have longed 17
to see what you see,
but they have not seen it ;
and to hear what you hear,
but they have not heard it.

Now, listen to the parable of the sower. When anyone hears 18
the word of the Realm and does not understand it, the 19
evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown
in his heart ; that is the man who is sown " on the road."
As for him who is sown " on stony soil," that is the man 20
who hears the word and accepts it at once with enthu-
siasm ; he has no root in himself, he does not last, but when 21
the word brings trouble or persecution he is at once
repelled. As for him who is sown " among thorns," 22
that is the man who listens to the word, but the worry
of the world and the delight of being rich choke the word ;
so it proves unfruitful. As for him who is sown " on 23
good soil," that is the man who hears the word and under-
stands it ; he bears fruit, producing now a hundredfold,
now sixty, and now thirtyfold.'

The parable of the Sower and its interpretation are too familiar to need elaboration. It is enough to remark that it has a certain pathos, inasmuch as it stands at the head of the parable collection, and may be taken as a description of the experience of Jesus himself. During the period of his open preaching to the crowds he had found all the classes of hearers whom he enumerates.

In one particular this evangelist expands his source. This is the reason given for the teaching in parables. The thought is the same ; they are intended for the disciples, who will

understand at once or have explanations given, while others will merely carry away with them an impression of a pleasant story. In Mark this is reinforced by a reference to Isaiah vi., though the prophet is not named. Matthew expands the reference into a direct quotation, and states definitely that when Jesus adopted this method **the prophecy of Isaiah** was **being fulfilled.** Further, the disciples ask Jesus, not for the meaning of the parable, but **why** it is that **he speaks in parables,** and are told the reason. It is that some may **understand** and that others may not. This is intelligible in its Marcan setting, for it is a part of the general withdrawal of Jesus from the public ministry. In this gospel, however, it takes a theological tinge. The inner circle are privileged, and to them alone were the **open secrets** revealed. It may be observed that the quotation from Isaiah vi. 9 f. is taken verbally from the LXX, and though there is no disagreement from the M.T., it is not likely that the *ipsissima verba* of the Greek text would have been maintained in independent translation.

24 **He put another parable before them. 'The Realm of heaven,'**
he said, 'is like a man who sowed good seed in his field,
25 **but while men slept his enemy came and resowed weeds**
26 **among the wheat and then went away. When the blade**
sprouted and formed the kernel, then the weeds appeared
27 **as well. So the servants of the owner went to him and**
said, "Did you not sow good seed in your field, sir? How
28 **then does it contain weeds?" He said to them, "An**
enemy has done this." The servants said to him, "Then
29 **would you like us to go and gather them?" "No," he**
said, "for you might root up the wheat when you were
30 **gathering the weeds. Let them both grow side by side till**
harvest; and at harvest-time I will tell the reapers to
gather the weeds first and tie them in bundles to be burnt,
**but to collect the wheat in my granary."'

This parable is not found elsewhere, and it has been suggested that as it takes the place of a much shorter parable—the seed growing secretly—in Mark, it may be an expansion due to the peculiar outlook of this evangelist. It offers an answer to

the age-long question, 'Why are the wicked permitted to remain and to prosper in a world governed by a righteous God?' Of course the question has a special bearing here, and the contrast is between the Christian and his opponents. The answer, generally speaking, is that the wrong cannot be righted without doing harm to the Christians. The constitution of God's universe is such that, if He were to interfere to root up the evil, the good also would suffer; the two are inextricably mixed. The further question, 'Why has God allowed such a confusion?' is not faced, and would not, perhaps, occur to the simpler minds of the early church. They did not ask why men (including the owner of the field) are permitted to sleep, and they found a satisfaction of their own difficulty in eschatology. The present mixed order may be allowed to continue, but it will sooner or later come to an end, and then the separation between the good and bad at the end of the world will be complete and final. To the modern mind the great difficulty is occasioned by the identification of the evil in the world with wicked men. This is so unlike the normal attitude of Jesus, who believed in human nature, and saw in its worst manifestations at least a possibility of good, that we are almost compelled to suspect that there has been at least some modification of his original words. This impression is borne out by ver. 42, which is almost a refrain in the eschatological language of this gospel.

He put another parable before them. 'The Realm of heaven,' 31
he said, 'is like a grain of mustard-seed which a man
takes and sows in his field. It is less than any seed on 32
earth, but when it grows up it is larger than any plant, it
becomes a tree, so large that *the wild birds* come and
***roost in its branches*.'**

A parable taken from Mark, illustrating the nature of the Kingdom of heaven. Jesus seems to call attention to the essential difference between his views of the Kingdom and those which were current amongst his people. It starts with a thing which is obscure and, indeed, insignificant (mustard-seed is a familiar Jewish emblem for minuteness); it grows

naturally, and without further human intervention; it reaches an unexpected size. This evangelist has made one small alteration in the words used by Jesus. In Mark iv. 32 we read 'the wild birds can roost under its shadow,' here **the wild birds . . . roost in its branches.** There is a touch here of that humour which we have learnt to recognize in the language of Jesus. The phrases seem to be taken from Ezekiel (xvii. 23, xxxi. 6), but the prophet is speaking of a cedar. Does the mustard-plant grow to the size of a cedar? No; its greatest height is 10 to 12 feet, but the little birds can take shelter under its branches just as well!

33 **He told them another parable. 'The Realm of heaven,' he said, 'is like dough which a woman took and buried in three pecks of flour, till all of it was leavened.'**

This parable seems to have been taken from Q, and both the First and Third Gospels connect it—naturally enough—with the Marcan parable of the **mustard-seed.** The lesson is essentially the same, though the stress is laid rather on the secrecy of the working of the Kingdom than on its insignificant origin. There is, further, the suggestion of the tumultuous upheaval of the dough, the rising of bubbles of gas to the surface, general signs of turmoil, movement, and life within. There is nothing stolid about the Kingdom.

34 **Jesus said all this to the crowds in parables; he never spoke to**
35 **them except in a parable—to fulfil what had been said by the prophet,**

I will open my mouth in parables,
I will speak out what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.

Ver. 34 forms the conclusion of Mark's section on parables, and is here transferred from its historical to its theological sphere by the addition of a verse from Psalm lxxviii. The quotation interprets rather than translates the M.T., while the LXX has here a literal rendering. This is a clear instance of a text from a collection of 'Testimonies,' and in this connexion it is interesting to find the Psalmist called a prophet.

Then he left the crowds and went indoors. And his disciples 36
came up to him saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the
weeds in the field.' So he replied, 'He who sows the good 37
seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good 38
seed means the sons of the Realm; the weeds are the sons
of the evil one; the enemy who sowed them is the devil; 39
the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are
the angels. Well then, just as the weeds are gathered 40
and burnt in the fire, so will it be at the end of the world;
the Son of man will despatch his angels, and they will 41
gather out of his Realm all who are hindrances and who
practice iniquity, and throw them into the furnace of fire; 42
there men will wail and gnash their teeth. Then the just 43
will shine like the sun in the Realm of their Father. He
who has an ear, let him listen to this.

The explanation of the parable of the weeds in the field has been assumed in discussing the parable itself.

The Realm of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field; the 44
man who finds it hides it and in his delight goes and sells
all he possesses and buys that field.
Again, the Realm of heaven is like a trader in search of fine 45
pearls; when he finds a single pearl of high price, he is 46
off to sell all he possesses and buy it.

Two parables peculiar to this gospel, illustrating the supreme value of the Realm of heaven. Here it is clearly some kind of a possession, which a man may take and keep as his own. It is so precious that it is well worth while for him who finds it to sacrifice all he possesses in order to secure it for himself. (The interpretation of the second parable which makes the Kingdom the merchant and suggests that God seeks men is probably too literal an explanation of the verses.) The difference between the two parables lies in the fact that in the first the discovery is made by accident, in the second it is the consummation of a life search. Some men find the Realm suddenly, and without definite intention; others give themselves to a search, and only after long years of effort attain to that which they seek.

47 **Again, the Realm of heaven is like a net which was thrown**
48 **into the sea and collected fish of every sort. When it was full, they dragged it to the beach and sitting down they gathered the good fish into vessels but flung away the bad.**
49 **So will it be at the end of the world. The angels will go out**
50 **and separate the evil from among the just and fling them into the furnace of fire; there men will wail and gnash their teeth.**

This parable, again, is peculiar to this gospel, but stands almost alone among the parables of the Realm in the lesson which it seeks to enforce. There will be many who will make their way into the Kingdom, who are unworthy, and who have no real place in it. The parable of the weeds in the field suggests that there is mixture in the world; this carries the matter further, and assumes people of every sort, some good, some bad, within the ranks of Christians themselves. It is difficult not to see here an echo of the experience of the church, which found among its members in the first few generations not a few who were Christians only in name, or who differed in doctrine from the accepted beliefs of their comrades. The eschatological note is characteristic.

51 **Have you understood all this?' They said to him, 'Yes.'**
52 **So he said to them, 'Well, then, every scribe who has become a disciple of the Realm of heaven is like a householder who produces what is new and what is old from his stores.'**

With these verses the collection of parables concludes. The meaning of the last few is obvious to the Twelve; they have understood all this. The last sentence is obscure, but seems to mean that those whose duty it is to be the disciples of the Realm of heaven—again we think of a somewhat developed church organization—are to be ready to offer a very wide range of truth. Much of what is included in the Old Dispensation is still valid, but there are human needs which are not met thereby. Just as the master of a house prepares to satisfy from his resources all under his care, and so must be willing to introduce what is new as well as what is

old, so must he who would minister in Christ to the needs of the world acknowledge that he has at his disposal far more than Judaism had to give men. It is true that Jesus came not to destroy the Law but to complete it, but the very act of completion must mean that there were great areas of truth to be added to what men already knew and held. He must produce what is new as well as what is old from his stores.

Now when Jesus had finished these parables he set out from 53
there, and went to his native place, where he taught the 54
people in the synagogue till they were astounded. They said, 'Where did he get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? Is this not the son of the joiner? Is not 55
his mother called Mary, and his brothers James and 56
Joseph and Simon and Judas? Are not his sisters settled here among us? Then where has he got all this?' So they were repelled by him. But Jesus said 57
to them, 'A prophet never goes without honour except in his native place and in his home.' There he could not 58
do many miracles owing to their lack of faith.

Matthew, using Mark for his own purposes, has already incorporated a good deal of the material which follows the introduction of the parabolic teaching in his source, and now takes up the narrative with the visit of Jesus to his native place, Nazareth. As usual he somewhat abbreviates his source, but there are two deliberate changes which illustrate the growth of a theological point of view. In the first place, instead of speaking of Jesus as 'the joiner,' the people of Nazareth ask, Is not this the son of the joiner? There seems to be a suggestion that Jesus himself had never actually engaged in the carpenter's work; the Jewish feeling was that the true Rabbi gives himself wholly and solely to the study of the Law. In the second place the 'could not do any miracle' of Mark appears as did[1] not do many miracles. The Marcan phrase might seem to imply a limitation on the powers of Jesus; the later evangelist, with his belief in the omnipotence of the Christ, uses language which leaves the reader free to suppose

[1] "Did," not "could," is the actual text here.

that Jesus could work miracles whether men believed or not, but that he would not do so unless he found men worthy. In the same spirit this Gospel omits all mention of the surprise which Jesus felt at the unbelief of the people (cf. Mark vi. 6). A feeling is already growing that he, the divine Messiah, must have been free from all human limitations and, to some extent, from human passions and emotions.

VIII. Chaps. xiv.–xvi.: Jesus in Exile

From this point onwards Matthew closely follows Mark in the order in which he places events, though from time to time he adds sections of teaching, usually parables, taken either from Q or from some other source. It would seem that he has largely abandoned the habit of grouping material, except in recording parables, especially near the end of the gospel. He has illustrated his main thesis, and it will now manifest itself rather in slight modifications of the source than in the introduction of fresh matter or in the rearrangement of the old.

xiv.

1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus.
2 And he said to his servants, 'This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead. That is why miraculous powers are working through him.'
3 For Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison on account of Herodias the wife of his brother
4 Philip, since John had told him, 'You have no right
5 to her.' He was anxious to kill him but he was afraid of the people, for they held John to be a prophet.
6 However, on Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias
7 danced in public to the delight of Herod; whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatever she wanted.
8 And she, at the instigation of her mother, said, 'Give me
9 John the Baptist's head this moment on a dish.' The king was sorry, but for the sake of his oath and his guests
10 he ordered it to be given her; he sent and had John
11 beheaded in the prison, his head was brought on a dish

and given to the girl, and she took it to her mother. His 12
disciples came and removed the corpse and buried him ;
then they went and reported it to Jesus.

The full significance of this narrative only appears in Mark. Matthew, in speaking of the extreme pharisaic hostility (xii. 14), has omitted to mention the Herodians, and so has failed to give us the connecting link between the death of **John the Baptist** and the departure of Jesus from Galilee. In Mark we gather that Herod's suspicion of Jesus was the result of the plot between the two parties ; the Pharisees felt it necessary to call in the secular arm, and the best way of doing this was to suggest to the Tetrarch that Jesus was especially dangerous. But, whether this be a correct interpretation of history or not, it is clear that Jesus' withdrawal from Galilee was a direct result of Herod's suspicions. He would not shrink from the Cross when the time came and when he had reached the proper spot, but his disciples were not yet ready to be left, and it was not in Galilee that he should suffer.

As usual the Marcan narrative is abbreviated, and there are slight differences in presentation. It is no longer Herodias who tries to get John killed, but Herod himself. It is not Herod's fear of John which kept the Baptist alive, but his fear of the people, and there is no mention of the respect paid by the Tetrarch or of his interviews with John. This difference in the attitude of Herod is the only important variation ; in spite of the compression, the other main features of the narrative are preserved. **The daughter of Herodias dances** before Herod at a feast held on his **birthday.** He is so pleased with her performance that he **promises with an oath to give her whatever she wanted,** and she, prompted by her mother, asks for **the head of John the Baptist on a dish.** An additional note at the end tells us (as Mark does not) that after the burial of the body, the disciples of John came and **reported to Jesus** what had happened. Evidently the writer's thought is that Jesus is the true successor of John, and that the followers of the latter will now naturally attach themselves to the former.

13 When Jesus heard it he withdrew by boat to a desert place
in private; but the crowds heard of it and followed him
14 on foot from the towns. So when he disembarked he
saw a large crowd, and out of pity for them he healed
15 their sick folk. When evening fell, the disciples came
up to him and said, 'It is a desert place and the day is
now gone; send off the crowds to buy food for themselves
16 in the villages.' Jesus said to them, 'They do not need
17 to go away; give them some food yourselves.' They
said, 'We have only five loaves with us and two fish.'
18 He said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered
19 the crowds to recline on the grass, and after taking the
five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven,
blessed them, and after breaking the loaves handed them
to the disciples, and the disciples handed them to the
20 crowd. They all ate and had enough; besides, they
picked up the fragments left over and filled twelve baskets
21 with them. The men who ate numbered about five
thousand, apart from the women and children.

Again the Marcan narrative is somewhat abbreviated, though the main outline of the story is preserved. In one detail only is there a difference of importance. In the source-Gospel the pity of Jesus leads him to teach the crowd; Matthew substitutes miracles of healing. The variation is, perhaps, characteristic. The aim of this evangelist is to shew Jesus as the Messiah, and in his dealings with the outside world his miraculous powers were of more value for this purpose than his teaching. That was best reserved for his disciples; what others needed was some sign which should be at once beneficent and authoritative.

In themselves, the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, and the companion miracle of the four thousand, offer greater difficulties to the modern mind than, perhaps, any others. To-day men seek in the Incarnation of God in Jesus a completeness which the needs of earlier generations have not stressed. The objection of the devout spirit to-day against miracle is not that it is impossible, but that it is non-human—for the

superhuman is always in a sense non-human. It is felt that if there be something in the historic Jesus which is different in kind from ordinary humanity, then the so-called Incarnation is unreal. The Word did not really become flesh unless he became also subject to the usual limitations and conditions of matter. That Jesus was unique in strength of character, in force of personality, in moral perfection, and in spiritual union with his Father, offers no difficulty, for these are all features of perfect human nature. It is further recognized that the exorcisms are easily explicable on psychological grounds ; such a person would naturally be able to cure this kind of mental and spiritual disease. There is also a growing sense of the spiritual element in the cure of bodily disease, and the healing miracles are not infrequently admitted to be 'possible' to so unique a personality. But the control of dead matter involved in the 'nature miracles' does not seem to be a feature of humanity, however perfect it may be, and not a few minds to-day are faced with the alternatives either of denying the humanity of Jesus (and so of discarding the thought of genuine Incarnation) or of suspecting the narrative.

It is, of course, possible that a fuller knowledge of human spiritual powers may lead to a more complete understanding of the interaction of mind and matter, and may yet serve to throw direct light on such narratives as this. But scientifically trained minds find the greatest difficulty in accepting this solution as being even a remote possibility. They recall the fact that the ancient world looked for miracle, and where their faith was won in other ways, they tended always to attribute miraculous powers to its objects. Jesus is not the only figure in the ancient world about whom such stories as this have gathered. If an event were not miraculous in itself it easily assumed a miraculous colour as the story was told and retold, and we have already seen suggestions of this process in comparing this gospel with the extant source on which its writer draws, while a study of the 'apocryphal' gospels shews clearly to what lengths it could go in the early Christian centuries.

Is it not possible that already in Mark we have the beginnings of the process? Needless to say, it is still in its infancy, and there are very few passages in which it is necessary to invoke such an explanation. But if there are any such passages, then this is one of them. Something certainly happened, the people **all ate and had enough.** It has been suggested that this was due to the example set by Jesus, and that the people found in the end that when they came to pool their resources, they had enough amongst them for their immediate needs. This, of course, is a guess, but if it be correct—or if there be any other explanation of the kind—then it is very easy to understand that it would be expanded into a miracle by a later generation. As a matter of fact, the more we know of the ancient world, the more we understand the mental and spiritual background of the primitive church, the more remarkable it becomes that we have so little material in our gospels for which such 'allowance' may have to be made.

22 Then he made the disciples embark in the boat and cross
before him to the other side, while he dismissed the
23 crowds; after he had dismissed the crowds he went
up the hill by himself to pray. When evening came
24 he was there alone, but the boat was now in the middle
of the sea, buffeted by the waves (for the wind was against
25 them). In the fourth watch of the night he went to
26 them, walking on the sea, but when the disciples saw him
walking on the sea they were terrified; 'It is a ghost,'
27 they said, and shrieked for fear. Then Jesus spoke to
them at once; 'Courage,' he said, 'it is I, have no
28 fear.' Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is really you
29 order me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.'
Then Peter got out of the boat and walked over the water
30 on his way to Jesus; but when he saw the strength of
the wind he was afraid and began to sink. 'Lord,'
31 he shouted, 'save me.' Jesus at once stretched his
hand out and caught him, saying, 'How little you trust
32 me! Why did you doubt?' When they got into the

boat the wind dropped, and the men in the boat worshipped 33
him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son.'
On crossing over they came to land at Gennesaret. The men 34
of that place recognized him and sent all over the sur- 35
rounding country, bringing him all who were ill and
begging him to let them touch the mere tassel of his 36
robe—and all who touched it got perfectly well.

What has been said about the last paragraph applies equally to this. It follows the Marcan narrative with some abbreviation and with a slight tendency to stress the miraculous element, for the boat is expressly stated to have been **in the middle of the sea.** But there is added an entirely fresh incident, the attempt of **Peter to walk over the water.** This is one of a number of narratives involving Peter which are peculiar to this gospel, and the facts suggest that the evangelist had a collection of traditions which concern him. In these, when we have isolated them from their context, we shall best see a metaphorical account of the apostle's character and spiritual experience. Whether we consult the gospel record or the history of the early church, we find him the same man, enthusiastic, impulsive, self-confident, genuinely devoted to his Master, but always liable to lose his nerve when confronted by danger, and to doubt the validity of the motives which had impelled him to action. It was not for nothing that Jesus, in affectionate irony, had called him 'The Rock.'

Another point needs to be noticed as a probable addition to the original narrative. In ver. 33 the disciples hail Jesus as **God's Son.** It is difficult not to suspect that this has been read back into the story by the evangelist. Here was a truth which he recognized from teaching and from experience. To his mind it must seem that the miracle which he found recorded in his sources was convincing proof of the doctrine, and it was only natural for him to suppose that the disciples themselves must have taken the same view. We may, however, doubt the historicity of the words at this point in the life of Jesus. Some time later Jesus himself asked them the question as to their opinion of him, and they,

through the mouth of Peter, acclaimed his Messiahship. This proved to be the turning-point in the ministry of Jesus, and if they had attained to the knowledge here ascribed to them, it is difficult to see why the consummation of the ministry of Jesus was so long delayed.

The chapter closes with a condensed picture of Jesus in Gennesaret, taken from Mark. In the original it serves as an illustration of the way in which Jesus was thronged by needy crowds, and so robbed of that privacy which was essential for the instruction of the disciples. Matthew is not interested in points of this kind, and he retains the section because it gives a further example of the miraculous powers of Jesus —powers which have been already manifest in the cure of the woman with hemorrhage.

XV.

1 Then Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem came to Jesus,
2 saying, 'Why do your disciples transgress the tradition
of the elders? They do not wash their hands when they
3 take their food.' He replied, 'And why do you transgress
4 the command of God with your traditions? God en-
joined, *Honour your father and mother,* and, *He who*
5 *curses his father or mother is to suffer death.* But you say,
whoever tells his father or mother, "This money might
have been at your service but it is dedicated to God," need
6 not honour his father or mother. So you have repealed the
7 law of God to suit your own tradition. You hypocrites!
Isaiah made a grand prophecy about you when he said,

8 *This people honours me with their lips,*
but their heart is far away from me:
9 *vain is their worship of me,*
for the doctrines they teach are but human precepts.'

10 Then he called the crowd and said to them, 'Listen,
understand this:

11 it is not what enters a man's mouth that defiles him,
what defiles a man is what comes out of his mouth.'

12 Then the disciples came up and said to him, 'Do you know
that the Pharisees have taken offence at what they hear

you say?' He replied, 'Any plant that my heavenly 13
Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; 14
they are blind guides of the blind, and if one blind man
leads another, both of them will fall into a pit.' Peter 15
answered, 'Explain this parable to us at anyrate.' He 16
said, 'And are you totally ignorant? Do you not see 17
how all that enters the mouth passes into the belly and
is then thrown out into the drain, while what comes out 18
of the mouth comes from the heart—and that is what
defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil designs, 19
murder, adultery, sexual vice, stealing, false witness,
and slander. That is what defiles a man; a man is not 20
defiled by eating with hands unwashed!'

This is not the first time that Jesus has been in conflict with the Pharisees, and it serves as an introduction to much teaching which might have been included in the Sermon on the Mount, but for the fact that it springs directly out of a charge brought against the disciples. The section is taken from Mark vii. 1–23, abbreviated by the omission of explanations which were unnecessary for a Jewish reader and of a few details in the more strictly narrative portions. As some compensation we have the insertion of two sayings which are not found in Mark. One of them (ver. 13) occurs nowhere else, and has a distinctly Johannine tinge; the other (ver. 14) is taken from Q, and appears in a much more suitable context in Luke vi. 39.

The whole passage once more illustrates the insistence of Jesus on the primary claims of the personal and of the spiritual. His disciples are charged with having neglected a rite which was not, indeed, prescribed in so many words in the Law, but was one of the seven duties added to the 613 commandments by the tradition of the elders, and held to be equally important. Its institution was traced back to Solomon by the rabbis, and, as a symbolic purification from the contamination of heathen touch, was held to be universally binding. What Jesus has observed in the Pharisees' insistence on legal accuracy is that they do not seem to trouble about the deeper implications of

the command of God, but concentrate on such minutiae of external observance.

This is brought out in two ways, apart from the more general condemnations contained in the inserted verses. In the first place, an illustration is offered from the law of **honour to father and mother.** If that law is binding, it is more important to observe the spirit of it than to perform vows, stringent though the latter may be. There is no need to suppose that Jesus had in mind definite falsehood, or that he was thinking of people who said that their money was dedicated and then did not give it to the sanctuary. It is quite in accord with his principles to insist that the human need of the parent—one of the closest and most clamant—must take precedence even of a sacred due. Religion must never be allowed to conflict with morality, and Jesus put the demands of personality in the very first place. This is directly in line with the teaching of the noblest spirits of the Old Dispensation. Prophets and, occasionally, psalmists had insisted that God did not ask for sacrifice and did not need man's material gifts. He does not delight in the blood of sacrificial animals, and, even if He did, would not ask man for them, since the whole universe is His. But He does ask for the right treatment of other men and women, and here devotion to parents takes a high place.

Jesus then turns to the question immediately before him. Again the insistence is on the spiritual and not on the material. Physical things have, in themselves, no spiritual significance. **What enters a man's mouth** cannot carry contamination to the soul. The heathen against whose robe the hand of the pious Jew might have brushed in walking through the city might be, and possibly was, stained with every sin which the Law and the God who gave the Law abhorred. But that outward contact was merely an outward contact, and nothing more. Unless and until the spirit of the pagan, represented by the sins which Jesus enumerates, entered into a man's heart, he remained unaffected, and the mere washing off of external contamination was as unnecessary as it was futile. **The mouth utters what the heart is full of** (xii. 34).

Going away from there Jesus withdrew to the district of Tyre 21
and Sidon. And a woman of Canaan came out of these 22
parts and wailed, 'Have pity on me, Lord, O Son of David!
My daughter is cruelly possessed by a daemon.' But he 23
made no answer to her. Then his disciples came up and
pressed him, saying, 'Send her away, she is wailing behind
us.' He replied, 'It was only to the lost sheep of the 24
house of Israel that I was sent.' But she came and 25
knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, do help me.' He 26
replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's bread and
throw it to the dogs.' 'No, sir,' she said, 'but even the 27
dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table.'
At that Jesus replied, 'O woman, you have great faith; 28
your prayer is granted as you wish.' And from that hour
her daughter was cured.

This incident is taken from Mark, but there are some interesting variations. In the source Jesus is visited by the mother as he rests secretly in a house; the evangelist, possibly with the blind man of Jericho in mind, makes her follow him through the streets, and tells of an attempt by the disciples to reduce her to silence. Further, the rebuke of Jesus is reinforced by the sentence found in ver. 24. This closely resembles the command given to the disciples when they are sent out on their evangelistic tour in x. 6. Neither verse is found in any other gospel, though they may well have represented the principle on which Jesus worked. This evangelist is writing for Jews, and he therefore takes pains to shew that it was only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel that Jesus was sent. His ultimate aim, it is true, was the winning of the whole world, but his method was to win his own people first, and then to use them as his evangelistic agents. His direct work lay with Israel and with Israel alone; any service rendered to the heathen was an interruption and might be a hindrance, as the present incident is actually represented in Mark. Some have felt that the treatment Jesus accorded this woman was rather harsh, and it has been suggested that the saying about the dogs has been reflected back into his

mouth from the woman's words. His action in healing the girl is an admirable illustration of his own teaching. His methods and almost his principles demanded that he should refuse to help these people, because they were outside the ranks of Israel, and because (so we gather from Mark) the performance of miracles was no part of his immediate duty at this time. But here was a human need, and so genuine a need that it gave birth to a spirit of extreme humility. Everything else must stand aside, the demand must be met, and the sufferer must be cured.

29 Then Jesus removed from that country and went along the sea
30 of Galilee ; he went up the hillside and sat there. And large crowds came to him bringing the lame, and the blind, the dumb, the maimed, and many others ; they laid them
31 at his feet, and he healed them. This made the crowd wonder, to see dumb people speaking, the lame walking,
32 and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples and said, 'I am sorry for the crowd ; they have been three days with me now, and they have nothing to eat. I will not send them away
33 starving, in case they faint on the road.' The disciples said to him, 'Where are we to get loaves enough in a
34 desert to satisfy such a crowd?' Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves have you got?' They said, 'Seven
35 and some little fish.' So he ordered the crowd to recline
36 on the ground. He took the seven loaves and the fish and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to the
37 disciples, and the disciples to the crowds. So the people all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left
38 over and filled seven large baskets with them. The men who ate numbered four thousand, apart from the children
39 and the women. Then he sent the crowd away, got into the boat and went to the territory of Magadan.

In the Marcan parallel the healing miracle which gathered the crowd together is simply the cure of a deaf-mute, and the two events are not necessarily closely connected. Matthew

has given us instead the cure of a large number of sufferers and made the miracles the direct attraction of the people.

In its essential features the miracle closely resembles the feeding of the five thousand. There are differences in detail, the crowd has been with Jesus three days, and the figures are not the same. But the remarks already made on xiv. 13–21 will also apply here. It should be added that there is a tendency to-day to suspect that we have here two accounts of the same event, accounts which very early diverged, and were assumed by Mark (whom our evangelist follows closely) to be different occasions. It will be noticed that the narrative closes with the retirement of Jesus and his disciples to Magadan which Matthew substitutes for the mysterious and unintelligible Dalmanutha of the present text of Mark.

xvi.

Now the Pharisees and Sadducees came up and, in order to 1
tempt him, asked him to show them a Sign from heaven.
He replied, 2

'It is an evil and disloyal generation that craves a Sign, 4
and no Sign shall be given to it except the Sign of Jonah.'

[Three uncials (C D W) of the fifth century and several versions, including the Latin and the Syriac (Vulgate), together with the Diatessaron, insert at the beginning of this answer the following: 'When evening comes, you say, "It will be fine," for the sky is red; in the morning you say, "It will be stormy to-day," for the sky is red and cloudy. You know how to distinguish the look of the sky, but you cannot read the signs of the times.' The majority of the uncials, with the Old Syriac and Origen, rightly omit the passage as irrelevant to the original text.]

Then he left them and went away.

We have already had, in xii. 38–40, a demand for a Sign, and it was noted there that the verses seemed to rest on the Marcan passage from which this is taken. No mention is made there of Jonah, and the insertion may be due to the mention of that prophet in xii. 41 (Q). It is to be noted that

no explanation of the Sign is given here. The passage in brackets, as a reference to the text of Moffatt will shew, has very early but indecisive authority. It resembles, though with interesting variations, Luke xii. 54–56, and, if original in the text of this gospel, is to be ascribed to Q.

We may doubt whether the introduction of Jonah in these verses is to be ascribed to Jesus himself. The **Sign from heaven** seems to be a general reference to the expectations of popular eschatology, based on Joel iii. 3, and Jesus is being challenged to prove himself to be the Messiah. **Sign** normally indicates a miracle with a meaning, a marvellous action which proves something, and a **Sign from heaven** would naturally be the strongest possible evidence to the type of mind which is convinced by miracles. But to Jesus miracles proved nothing except the moral and spiritual character involved in them, and he consistently refused to reinforce his claims by such methods. The principle finds its most striking expression in the temptation to throw himself down from a pinnacle of the Temple, but he seems to have felt always the danger that he might be regarded as a mere wonder-worker, to the obscuring of his real work and purpose. Therefore no **Sign** is **given.**

5 When the disciples reached the opposite side, they found they
6 had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them,
'See and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and
7 Sadducees.' They argued among themselves, 'But we
8 have not brought any bread!' When Jesus noted this
he said, 'How little trust you have in me! Why all this
9 talk, because you have brought no bread? Do you not
understand even yet? Do you not remember the five
loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you
10 took up? And the seven loaves of the four thousand
11 and how many large baskets you took up? Why do you
not see that I was not speaking to you about bread? No,
beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.'
12 Then they realized that what he told them to beware of
was not leaven but the teaching of the Pharisees and
Sadducees.

This incident comes upon us as a flash of light, illuminating the relations between Jesus and his disciples, and the difficulties he had to meet in dealing with them. It is taken from Mark viii. 14–21, but with some modifications. In the first place in the source they are all in the boat, and have not yet reached the opposite side. Then for 'Herod' this evangelist has substituted the Sadducees. Finally (not to mention verbal alterations), the disciples are represented at the end as understanding what Jesus had meant.

If Jesus had to meet hostility from the outside world, he had at least as serious a problem presented by the stupidity of his own followers. They loved him passionately, but they did not understand him, and they found it difficult even to give him their attention. He had them at last to himself, and could begin to teach them something. In his opening words he mentioned leaven—and we shall never know for certain what he meant. The teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees of this gospel or the 'hypocrisy' of Luke xii. 1 may be right, though neither suits the Marcan original. But the word had other associations for the disciples, and it instantly reminded them of their own lack of foresight and care. They were promptly thrown into a state of mild panic by the fear of possible hunger, and Jesus had to fall back on the old lesson that, especially when he was with them, there was no need to worry about the things needed for the body.

Now when Jesus came to the district of Caesarea Philippi he 13
asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of man
is?' They told him, 'Some say John the Baptist, 14
others Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'
He said to them, 'And who do you say I am?' So 15
Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the 16
living God.' Jesus answered him, 'You are a blessed 17
man, Simon Bar-jona, for it was my Father in heaven,
not flesh and blood, that revealed this to you. Now I 18
tell you, Peter is your name, and on this rock I will build
my church; the powers of Hades shall not succeed against
it. I will give you the keys of the Realm of heaven; 19

Whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven,
and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.'

20 **Then he forbade the disciples to tell anyone he was the Christ.**

Here we reach the crisis, the turning-point in the ministry of Jesus. He knew what lay before him. He knew because he planned the future, with his own death at Jerusalem. He had therefore to secure some representatives whom he could leave behind him to carry on his work. To that end he had kept these twelve to himself and taught them as much as they could understand—and the last incident has shewn us how little that was. The final, crucial question was whether at least they recognized in him the Messiah. If that were once secured, then they could proceed to learn what manner of Messiah he was, and how far he differed from that popular conception of an earthly potentate which they themselves still shared. The one essential was personal devotion to him, and that was what he sought to secure from them. The narrative is, of course, taken from Mark, but there are important alterations. To the words of the confession in the source Peter here adds **the Son of the living God**, and we are probably justified in suspecting that this phrase was read back into his mind by the experience and belief of the early church. The divine Sonship of the Christ formed no part of contemporary messianic belief, and, until the day of Pentecost, the disciples were not given to the development of new ideas.

More important is the addition of the reply of Jesus, and the interest of his words lies partly in the part they have played in the history of the western church. Peter is congratulated on his great discovery; the knowledge of the Messiahship of Jesus can only have come from **the Father in heaven**. Ver. 18 is crucial from the point of view of church history. The Roman church has, of course, based upon it the claims of the see of Rome, as the historic representative of Peter through the ages. An attempt has been made on the

Protestant side to meet this argument by pointing out that whilst Peter's name is masculine, the word for **rock** is feminine. This might have weight if we were sure that Jesus was speaking in Greek. But as he seems (judging from the **Bar-jona**) to have been speaking in Aramaic, the objection cannot be sustained, for there is only the one word in Aramaic, and, except when used as a man's name, it is always feminine. Much sounder is the interpretation which regards the **rock**, not as Peter himself, but as the faith to which he has just given utterance. It is on this that the **church** will be built. This is one of the only two passages in the gospels in which the term 'church' appears, and the other is also found in this gospel. It suggests that the whole section is possibly to be attributed to the experience of later Christians.

Certainly, whether this prophecy be actually a word of Jesus or whether it be a later interpretation, it has been abundantly fulfilled. The great racial movements of the fifth century overthrew the political world, but the church adapted herself to the new conditions, and still went on her way. A thousand years later came that intellectual revolution which we call the Renaissance, and though it so completely uprooted the whole world of mediaeval thought that we to-day find it almost impossible to think ourselves into the position of the fourteenth century, the church found a new life, and both that portion of it which, in northern Europe, broke away from the main body, and those who maintained the traditional forms, won a fresh vigour and a new interpretation of Christ. The **powers of Hades** have not prevailed against it.

The last feature in this significant addition is the extraordinary power granted to Peter both to **prohibit** and to **permit**. It is impossible to say how far this authority should be extended, whether it should be confined to Peter himself, transmitted to his personal successors, or vested in the general feeling and spirit of those who have made the great confession the basis of their religious life. From what we know of the thought and experience of the apostolic church, we may suspect that the last interpretation is nearest to the

truth. The Spirit of Christ, manifested not merely in individual Christians but in the community as a whole, may surely be trusted to lead the growth and development of the body in whom he dwells, till the latter becomes an expression, in the material sphere and on the earthly plane, of that Kingdom which is not made with hands but is eternal in the heavens.

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he had to leave for Jerusalem and endure great suffering at the hands of the elders and high priests and scribes, and
22 be killed and raised on the third day. Peter took him and began to reprove him for it; 'God forbid, Lord,' he said.
23 'This must not be.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, you Satan! You are a hindrance to me!
24 Your outlook is not God's but man's.' Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me;

25 for whoever wants to save his life will lose it,
and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

26 What profit will it be if a man gains the whole world and forfeits his own soul? What will a man offer as an
27 equivalent for his soul? For the Son of man is coming in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he
28 will reward everyone for what he has done. I tell you truly, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death till they see the Son of man coming himself to reign.'

As soon as Jesus has secured from his disciples the recognition of his Messiahship, he can now take the next step, and begin to teach them that the true Messiah is a very different person from what they expect him to be. Instead of a victorious commander, he will endure great suffering as a condemned criminal, rejected by elders and high priests and scribes—all that counts in the Jewish State. But the first effect of this lesson is to suggest to the disciples that he is despondent as to the issue of his work, and Peter at once steps forward urging him not to anticipate such a disaster

as that which he has foretold. It is curious to notice that the prophecy of the Resurrection seems to have had little or no effect in removing the general impression of gloom in the words of Jesus.

The Master's reply is a little obscure, and may have suffered in transmission. He recognizes in the words of Peter a recrudescence of the old temptation to fall down and worship the devil, that all the kingdoms of the world may be his. But why should he tell the tempter to get behind him? Possibly the original phrase (for which, in Mark, at any rate, there is some textual justification) was 'Get behind thee,' not 'behind me.' This, though unintelligible to a Greek ear, is a literal translation of an Aramaic idiom which means simply 'Get back,' 'Get away,' and we may conjecture that this was the actual form used by Jesus. The reason for this stern rebuke is that Peter is thinking on the human plane, not as God thinks and would have man think; his outlook is not God's but man's. Our evangelist adds to the words as they appear in Mark the phrase, 'You are a hindrance to me, something over which I am in danger of tripping and falling.'

In order to emphasize the point, Jesus proceeds to explain the conditions of service in the new Kingdom. In Mark his words are addressed to a crowd which he summons to hear them, in Matthew to his disciples alone. But in any case they present us with the deepest statement of the ethical teaching of Jesus on its personal side. There is a certain lack of clearness both in the English and in the Greek here. The same Greek word is rendered life in ver. 25 and soul in ver. 26, but, as a matter of fact, the Greek word itself can only be a translation of an Aramaic phrase which in nine cases out of every ten will be the equivalent of a reflexive pronoun: 'who ever wants to save himself will lose himself, and whoever loses himself for my sake will find himself. What profit will it be if a man gains the whole world and forfeits himself? What will a man offer as an equivalent for himself (to buy himself back when he has once lost himself)?'

A man's first care is to win himself, to find and use his

true personality. This, says Jesus, can only be done when a man denies himself, disowns himself, refuses to admit that he himself has any value or need be at all considered in any way, save as a means to an end, an instrument for achieving a given task. He must empty himself, in order that he may be filled. And that which he has a right to expect is not a reward, a crown or a throne ; it is only a cross. Indeed, it is so probable that he will have to endure this last agony and shame, that he will do well to have his cross with him, so that he may be prepared when the moment comes for him to use it. Thus, and only thus, by self-abnegation which carries him right to the point of the cross, can a man really find himself, be his true self, and play his man's part on the stage of this world.

It is true that there is an ulterior reward, and, it may be, one not so far distant. Students of the gospels have disagreed a good deal in recent years as to the extent to which Jesus shared in the eschatological views of his contemporaries. Some think that he was entirely at one with them, and believed that his death and resurrection would usher in the glorious messianic age. Others, with more probability, believe that he was accommodating his language to that of his hearers, and that his prophecy of the coming Kingdom was truly fulfilled in his death or in the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. It is impossible to dogmatize ; we can only say that, in a very real sense, the Son of man came to reign upon the Cross, and that there began his true empire of the hearts and souls of humanity.

C. CHAPS. XVII.–XX. : THE NEW MESSIAHSHIP

With a few additions, the evangelist follows now the order of events given in Mark. As we have already seen, as soon as Jesus received from his disciples the assurance that they recognized in him the Messiah, he began the new lesson, and tried to shew them what manner of Messiah he was. The scene changes, and a part of what Jesus has to tell them is said on the journey to Jerusalem. Practically all the incidents in Mark illustrate the new teaching, but one or two of the

additions in this gospel are, from this point of view, irrelevant. Several times Jesus expressly foretells his own death, and repeatedly illustrates the difference between the old and the new. In particular, he insists on a complete change of values. It is not the type of person who has had authority, honour, and rank in the former dispensation who is to stand high in the new order. On the contrary, it will be found that there is to be a complete reversal of standards of excellence, and 'many that are first shall be last, and the last first.'

xvii.

Six days afterwards Jesus took Peter, James and his brother 1
John, and led them up a high hill by themselves; in 2
their presence he was transfigured, his face shone like
the sun, and his clothes turned white as light. There 3
appeared to them Moses and Elijah, who conversed with
Jesus. So Peter addressed Jesus and said, 'Lord, it is 4
a good thing we are here; pray let me put up three tents
here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'
He was still speaking when a bright cloud overshadowed 5
them, and from the cloud a voice said,

'This is my Son, the Beloved, in him is my delight:
listen to him.'

When the disciples heard the voice they fell on their 6
faces in terror; but Jesus came forward and touched them, 7
saying, 'Rise, have no fear.' And on raising their eyes they 8
saw no one except Jesus all alone. As they went down the 9
hill Jesus ordered them, 'Tell this vision to nobody until
the Son of man is raised from the dead.' The disciples 10
inquired of him, 'Then why do the scribes say that
Elijah has to come first?' He replied, 'Elijah to come 11
and restore all things? Nay, I tell you Elijah has already 12
come, but they have not recognized him—they have
worked their will on him. And the Son of man will
suffer at their hands in the same way.' Then the dis- 13
ciples realized he was speaking to them about John the
Baptist.

The story of the transfiguration is taken directly from

Mark, and we have an exceptional feature in that the narrative is expanded, not condensed. The chief addition is in vers. 6–8, where Mark simply says that they looked round suddenly and saw no one but Jesus alone with them. The announcement of the Passion at the end of ver. 12 is also absent from Mark. We may conjecture that these details were added from another source, possibly that which we have already noted as containing special material connected with Peter. We observe also that the description of the transfigured Christ is changed—Mark compares his aspect to that of garments superlatively whitened, but not **white as light**, and that the words **in him is my delight** are added to the utterance of the Voice. The significance of **the Beloved** has been noted in speaking of the baptism.

It will be noticed that Matthew calls this experience a **vision.** That is to say, he thought of it as belonging to the realm of the subjective rather than to that of the objective. Its place in the spiritual history of the disciples is not difficult to determine. They had but lately admitted clearly that their Master was the Messiah, and, in view of all he had begun to tell them about his Messiahship and that which lay before him, they needed some assurance that they were not misled. This is secured for them by the transfiguration. For the moment the veil of material unreality is torn aside, and they are permitted to see past it into the great truth of Jesus. Now at last they really know him, and though there may be doubt and uncertainty, it will always be possible for them to come back to this hour, and to find in it security and faith.

One question only remains unsolved in their minds. The traditional eschatology of **the scribes** derived from Malachi iv. 5 the doctrine that before the Messiah came there must be a messenger, an **Elijah**, who should in some way prepare for his arrival. How can Jesus be the Messiah if this person has not yet **come?** The answer is that he **has already come**, and from the words of Jesus the disciples **realize that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist.** Their last doubt is resolved, and they can now freely accept Jesus as the Messiah.

When they reached the crowd, a man came up and knelt to 14
him. 'Ah, sir,' he said, 'have pity on my son; he is 15
an epileptic and he suffers cruelly, he often falls into the
fire and often into the water. I brought him to your 16
disciples, but they could not heal him.' Jesus answered, 17
'O faithless and perverse generation, how long must I still
be with you? How long have I to bear with you? Bring
him here to me.' So Jesus checked the daemon and it 18
came out of him, and from that hour the boy was healed.
Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and said, 'Why 19
could we not cast it out?' He said to them, 'Because 20
you have so little faith. I tell you truly, if you had faith
the size of a grain of mustard-seed, you could say to this
hill, "Move from here to there," and remove it would;
nothing would be impossible for you.'

The narrative is abbreviated from that of Mark, though all the essential features are preserved. One slight change is made; Mark describes the sufferer as a demoniac, this evangelist says that he is an epileptic—literally 'moonstruck.' Matthew sees in the story a lesson on faith, and adds at the end a sentence combining a phrase which comes, apparently, from Q, for it appears again in Luke xvii. 6, with another which appears in its original Marcan context at xxi. 21. There is a slight difference, for Luke has a mulberry tree instead of a hill. The latter is the more familiar phrase, as we see from passages like 1 Corinthians xiii. 2, and many places in Jewish writings. But it is clear that this difference does not seriously affect the lesson; a mulberry tree is as difficult to transplant with a word as is a hill.

Few of the terms used by Jesus are more difficult to understand than the word 'faith.' It is a quality which Jesus himself has to overflowing, but it is one which he also expects to find in his followers. On another occasion he is surprised by the disciples' lack of it (Mark iv. 40), and in that passage it is clear that to him it is the antithesis of fear. There is no question of fear in the present context—at least none is expressed. Further, it is to be noted that the quantity of it

is a matter of indifference. We must avoid trying to read into the grain of mustard-seed a lesson on the vitality of one kind of faith as compared with others, or on any peculiar quality of faith demanded of the disciples. Faith is always of the same quality and efficiency. The point is that if the disciples had had any at all, even the smallest quantity, they would be superior to all ordinary limitations and conditions. The language of Mark leaves it open to us to suspect that they had never even tried to cure this patient. They had had a good deal of experience in exorcisms, but they felt at once that this case was beyond them, and they had failed to make the necessary effort. Matthew's wording makes this explanation a little less probable, but not impossible.

But if we are to make any attempt to understand what Jesus meant by faith, we must go further than this. To him it seems to have been essentially a mystical experience, or perhaps rather a mystical faculty. It is the power to pass beyond the ordinary bounds of matter and the things of sense, and to penetrate the secret of spiritual reality. It is more than an intellectual appreciation of truth, more than a mental acceptance of statements about God and the world. It is at least the translation of this intellectually perceived truth into actual experience, a weaving of the doctrines of the spiritual life into the very fabric of the soul. The sensuous world is God's, that is true ; but it is not the final reality, and should serve to be a faint expression of the nature and character of God. Jesus did not argue from the world to God, from physical experience to spiritual reality. His processes were the exact opposite of this ; he knew God first of all, and from this knowledge derived his interpretation of the outer material universe. It is this which mystifies us about him, perhaps more than anything else, and is the supreme obstacle to the understanding of Jesus. We tend to judge his principles and interpret his language from the lower normal human point of view, with the result that we invert his position, and utterly fail to appreciate him. It is as if we looked through a telescope from the wrong end.

Whether the actual saying of Jesus reported in ver. 20

referred originally to a hill or to a mulberry tree, it is not likely that Jesus ever intended his words to be taken absolutely literally. His audience would expect and rightly understand that hyperbole which is the usual method of Oriental emphasis. But it is clear that to one who starts with God as the basic fact of experience (as Jesus did), hills and mulberry trees alike are extraordinarily insignificant details. The largest of physical obstacles and objections, the most serious of material difficulties, does not really mean anything, when it stands alongside the great spiritual entities which Jesus always put first. Jesus did not say, as the Indian idealist would do, that the hill and the tree are unreal and illusory. He recognized their validity for experience—they were the work of his Father. But he who is in the secret of God's heart, he who is intimate with the Creator, will never find himself at a loss because of purely physical things, nor will his ideals be frustrated by happenings within the realm of mere creation.

When his adherents mustered in Galilee Jesus told them, 'The 22
Son of man is to be betrayed into the hands of men; they 23
will kill him, but on the third day he will be raised.'
They were greatly distressed at this.

Another announcement of what Jesus was to endure. It is given in Mark (ix. 30–32) as a regular element in his teaching at this time, and while here the disciples are greatly distressed, in the source-Gospel they simply do not understand what Jesus means. To the previous announcement, recorded in xvi. 21, there is now added the detail that the Son of Man is to be betrayed.

When they reached Capharnahum, the collectors of the temple- 24
tax came and asked Peter, 'Does your teacher not pay the
temple-tax?' He said, 'Yes.' But when he went in- 25
doors Jesus spoke first; 'Tell me, Simon,' he said,
'from whom do earthly kings collect customs or taxes?
Is it from their own people or from aliens?' 'From 26
aliens,' he said. Then Jesus said to him, 'So their own
people are exempt. However, not to give any offence to 27

them, go to the sea, throw a hook in, and take the first fish you bring up. Open its mouth and you will find a five-shilling piece ; take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.'

We have no parallel for this passage in any other gospel, and it may well have been derived from that Petrine source to which we have several times referred details. Its chief motive seems to be the insistence on the unique relation of Jesus and therefore of his followers to God, and suggests that the early church, even in its Jewish section, felt that it should be free from the sacred dues payable by Israel. Others—subjects, but not children—might have to pay customs or taxes, but Jesus stood so close to God that it was only reasonable to suppose that he would be exempt. It is worth remarking that we have here no record of the actual miracle. Peter *may* have gone to catch a fish, but the evangelist does not say so, and while later generations have read a miracle into the story, it is possible, even probable, that Jesus did not mean, and that Peter did not understand, that the tax was actually to be met in this way. Peter was a fisherman, and the treasure found in a fish was a familiar element in stories both Jewish and pagan (the ring of Polycrates is a good illustration). Jesus seems to say, in effect : ' You know perfectly well that we stand in a unique relation to Him in whose honour the temple tax is paid. You know that for His sake we have abandoned everything, I my workshop and you your nets, and therefore we have literally no resources of our own. Your only chance of paying this for us would be to find the coin in the mouth of a fish—you know what the probabilities are. If you could do that, then it would be a sign that, after all, we were really liable for the tax.'

xviii.

1 At that hour the disciples came and asked Jesus, 'Who is
2 greatest in the Realm of heaven ? ' So he called a child,
3 set it among them, and said, ' I tell you truly, unless you
turn and become like children, you will never get into the
4 Realm of heaven at all. Whoever humbles himself like

this child, he is the greatest in the Realm of heaven ; and 5
whoever receives a little child like this for my sake, receives
me. But whoever is a hindrance to one of these little ones 6
who believe in me, better for him to have a great mill-stone
hung round his neck and be sunk in the deep sea. Woe 7
to the world for hindrances ! Hindrances have to come,
but—woe to the man by whom the hindrance does come !

If your hand or your foot is a hindrance to you, cut it 8
off and throw it away ;
better be maimed or crippled and get into Life,
than keep both feet or hands and be thrown into
the everlasting fire.
If your eye is a hindrance to you, tear it out and 9
throw it away ;
better get into Life with one eye
than keep your two eyes and be thrown into the
fire of Gehenna.
See that you do not despise one of these little ones ; for I tell 10
you, their angels in heaven always look on the face of my
Father in heaven.

With some modifications this passage corresponds to Mark ix. 33–50, and seems to be (even in Mark) a group of sayings whose connexion is decidedly loose. Probably they were not all uttered at the same time, but were put together because one led naturally on to the other. The links are more carefully made in Matthew than in Mark, partly by the addition of sayings from other sources, and partly by omitting portions of the text.

The first question is, **Who is the greatest in the Realm of heaven ?** It is difficult for the western mind to realize the enormous importance that is laid on questions of precedence in the East. Personal standing and authority claim far greater respect than law or principle, and the great person is one who receives honour, obedience, and service from all around him. In Mark the answer given to this question is one of the big paradoxes of Jesus : the great person is not he who receives service but he who gives it, and the principle is carried

to such an extent that the highest position of all is only to be attained by one who makes himself the slave of his neighbours. Matthew does not venture to reproduce this startling inversion of society, but at once introduces the child as a model. It is not merely the simplicity of the child that Jesus has in view, it is even more the fact that he is starting life afresh, with no preconceived notions ; the saying means much the same as the Johannine ' Ye must be born again.' Vers. 3–4 are peculiar to this gospel in their present form, though ver. 3 is derived from Mark x. 15.

Ver. 5 repeats a thought which has already been somewhat elaborated in x. 40–42, and receives further treatment in chap. xxv. The evangelist omits the narrative of the man who, without being a professed follower of Jesus, performed exorcisms in his name, and passes on to a series of sayings (originally, no doubt, disconnected) about hindrances. The first of these deals with hindrances placed in the way of the little ones. What the punishment for these will be is not stated, but it is worse than being drowned. The verse is a striking illustration of the supreme interest Jesus took in personality, as against all other considerations. Ver. 7 is a saying which does not occur elsewhere, though it recalls what Jesus has to say about Judas in xxvi. 24 (cf. Mark xiv. 21). It is, perhaps, the nearest approach to pessimism recorded of Jesus. There is something in humanity as it is which makes these fearful hindrances inevitable, they have to come ; there is no escaping suffering under existing conditions. And the suffering is not merely that inflicted on the victim ; it is also that which is in store for the wrongdoer himself. Jesus—and surely this is one of his outstanding characteristics—always accepted the facts ; he never pretended that things were better than they were ; he never said ' Peace, Peace,' where there was no peace. He found in human nature the most precious thing in God's universe, and the noblest, but it was very far from being what it ought to be. Its greatness and holiness were potential rather than actual, and he was concerned, not to gloze over the truth, but to face it and to remedy it. But the best and swiftest of remedies must fail to undo

the past, and to some extent must fail to avoid the effects of the past.

The lesson of all this terrible facing of the truth is that at all costs the evil must be avoided. Neither man—nor, it would seem, God—can alter what has already been done, but man can avoid a repetition of the evil in future. And so strongly does Jesus feel this that he urges men to get rid of everything in life which forms a hindrance to the development of the spiritual life. Even if it be something so useful and so intimate as a man's own hand, foot, or eye, it must go. There are bigger issues at stake, and nothing in the external and physical life is so valuable as to counterbalance a real injury done to the spirit. The saying has already appeared in v. 29–30.

The passage concludes with a reference to the danger of despising the little ones. It introduces us to a theory familiar enough to the contemporaries of Jesus, that of the angels. It may be that the idea came in the first instance from Persian thought, and had astrological associations, but it was firmly rooted in the Jewish mind of the time of Jesus. Every human being on earth has his celestial counterpart, who is intimately connected with him, and represents him before the face of the Father in heaven. Whatever happens in this world to the one member of the pair is depicted in heaven by the other. It is, therefore, impossible that any wrong done to a human child should escape the notice of God, for it will appear before him through the angel.

Tell me, if a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays, 12
will he not leave the ninety-nine sheep on the hills and go
in search of the one that has strayed? And if he happens 13
to find it, I tell you he rejoices over it more than over the
ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will 14
of your Father in heaven that a single one of these little
ones should be lost.

This familiar parable is clearly taken from Q, and reappears in Luke xv., where the lesson is reinforced by the record of two other parables of similar import. Its meaning and purpose

are too obvious to need any elaboration. Once again we see the inestimable importance that Jesus attaches to the individual human soul. We feel that even if only one single individual had been brought to God through the Cross of Christ, God would still have counted that sacrifice worth while, and God would have rejoiced over him.

15 If your brother sins [against you], go and reprove him, as
between you and him alone. If he listens to you, then you
16 have won your brother over; but if he will not listen,
take one or two others along with you, so that *every case
may be decided on the evidence of two or of three witnesses.*
17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church; and if he
refuses to listen to the church, treat him as a pagan or a
18 taxgatherer. I tell you truly,
Whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in
heaven,
and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted
in heaven.
19 I tell you another thing: if two of you agree on earth about
anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father
in heaven.'

We have here a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus which concern the conduct and nature of the church. The first (vers. 15–17) has no exact parallel elsewhere, though the question of forgiveness is raised in Luke xvii. 3–4 (cf. vers. 21 f. of the present chapter). The form which the words take suggests that they are based on the teaching of Jesus, but have been modified by the actual experience of the church. They read far more like a passage from the *Didaché* than from the gospels, and are to be understood as a piece of primitive church legislation, thrown back into the mouth of Jesus, as rightly interpreting his spirit and methods. If one member sins against another, the urgent problem is that the wrongdoer should be won over. Only in the last resort, when the pleading of individuals and of the church as a whole has failed, is he to be regarded as hopeless, and treated as a pagan or a taxgatherer.

Ver. 18—again peculiar to this gospel—recalls a question which arose in connexion with xvi. 19, and may well be an earlier form of the same saying. Like the preceding verses, however, it reflects a certain amount of experience and thinking on the part of the church. They had the spirit of Jesus with them. They were his 'body,' his material efficient agent in a physical world. Relying on the power that they knew to be in their midst, they were certain that their code had divine endorsement: what they **permitted on earth** was **permitted** by the God who dwelt in them and guided them; what they forbade was forbidden equally by Him. The same principle is applied to prayer. The church felt that if Jesus were really **among** them, then they must be thinking his thoughts and uttering his prayers. There could, therefore, be no doubt about the real fulfilment or the full satisfaction of their needs. The saying has analogies in the Fourth Gospel, and breathes its spirit. People are gathered in the **name** of Jesus, and in that **name** they speak. In rabbinic phrase, to say anything in the 'name' of another was to quote him. So the church felt that such requests as they could expect to find granted were those which were dictated by the Spirit of Christ. It was not their own words that they were uttering; they were simply quoting Jesus.

Then Peter came up and said to him, 'Lord, how often is my 21
brother to sin against me and be forgiven? Up to seven
times?' Jesus said to him, 'Seven times? I say, 22
seventy times seven! That is why the Realm of heaven 23
may be compared to a king who resolved to settle accounts
with his servants. When he began the settlement, a debtor 24
was brought in who owed him three million pounds;
as he was unable to pay, his master ordered him to be sold, 25
along with his wife and children and all he had, in payment
of the sum. So the servant fell down and prayed him, 26
"Have patience with me, and I will pay you it all." And 27
out of pity for that servant his master released him and
discharged his debt. But as that servant went away, he 28
met one of his fellow-servants who owed him twenty

pounds, and seizing him by the throat he said, "Pay your
29 debt!" So his fellow-servant fell down and implored him,
saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you."
30 But he refused; he went and had him thrown into prison,
31 till he should pay the debt. Now when his fellow-servants
saw what had happened they were greatly distressed, and
they went and explained to their master all that had
32 happened. Then his master summoned him and said,
"You scoundrel of a servant! I discharged all that debt
33 for you, because you implored me. Ought you not to have
had mercy on your fellow-servant, as I had on you?"
34 And in hot anger his master handed him over to the tor-
35 turers, till he should pay him all the debt. My heavenly
Father will do the same to you unless you each forgive your
brother from the heart.'

The question of the treatment of injuries has been touched upon in vers. 15 f., and here receives a fuller treatment. The form which the opening remarks take may have been derived from the Petrine collection which we have already had occasion to presuppose, but the essence of the lesson appears again in Luke xvii. 4. Forgiveness is not so much an act as an attitude. If a man were to count up to seventy times seven and at the four hundred and ninety-first offence say, 'Now I have fulfilled my duty; I need not forgive again,' he would thereby prove that he had never really forgiven at all. It does not matter how often the forgiveness is needed; it must be granted every time.

This general lesson is reinforced by a parable, found only in this gospel. It adds a new consideration to the demand made for free pardon for injuries. The greatest creditor in the universe is God; all wrong affects Him; all sin is sin against Him. And He forgives the whole, freely and without stint or reservation. Just because each one of us has received so immeasurable a pardon from the greatest Sufferer of all, the very least we can do is to extend to the petty wrongs that we have endured that same forbearance which we have so richly received. And if we fail to apply this principle we have

before us the warning of the parable. It must not be assumed that the creditor king is acting arbitrarily in withdrawing his pardon from the debtor, and in reimposing the penalty for the debt. That is the way in which the truth must naturally be presented to such an audience as Jesus had. But the matter goes deeper than the irresponsible will of an omnipotent monarch. Forgiveness is not and cannot be one-sided. It is not enough for it to be offered by the injured party ; it remains incomplete till it has been accepted by the wrongdoer. And the action of the unmerciful servant shews that his acceptance is unreal. When God forgives us, He restores that ideal relationship between ourselves and Him which has been broken by our sin ; He 'atones,' makes us one with Him. That means of necessity that we must share in His spirit and attitude, and if these things are wanting it proves that we have not taken advantage of the offer that He has made to us. If we forgive not men their trespasses, neither can our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses.

xix.

When Jesus finished saying this he moved from Galilee and went to the territory of Judaea that lies across the Jordan. 1
Large crowds followed him and he healed them there. 2

The narrative of Mark is here resumed. Jesus is now starting on the last journey, and takes the usual Jewish route across the Jordan, avoiding Samaria. It will be noticed that whereas in Mark he teaches the crowds who follow him, here he heals their diseases. We have met with this variation before, and it seems to be characteristic of the gospel to stress the healing ministry of Jesus.

Then the Pharisees came up to tempt him. They asked, 'Is it right to divorce one's wife for any reason?' He replied, 'Have you never read that He who *created them male and female* from the beginning said, 3 4 5

Hence a man shall leave his father and mother,
and cleave to his wife,
and the pair shall be one flesh?

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What God has 6

joined, then, man must not separate.' They said to him,
'Then why did Moses lay it down that we were to *divorce*
8 *by giving a separation-notice?*' He said to them, 'Moses
permitted you to divorce your wives, on account of the
hardness of your hearts, but it was not so from the be-
9 ginning. I tell you, whoever divorces his wife except for
unchastity and marries another woman commits adultery;
and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.'
10 The disciples said to him, 'If that is a man's position with
11 his wife, there is no good in marrying.' He said to them,
'True, but this truth is not practicable for everyone, it is
only for those who have the gift.
12 There are eunuchs who have been eunuchs from their
birth,
there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men,
and there are eunuchs who have made themselves
eunuchs for the sake of the Realm of heaven.
Let anyone practice it for whom it is practicable.'

Except for the last three verses, this passage is taken from Mark, and though there is some rearrangement of the material, the actual words are repeated practically verbatim. The only important variation is the insertion in ver. 9 of the phrase **except for unchastity.** And in the citation from Genesis ii. 24 (made verbatim from the LXX) the words **and cleave to his wife** are omitted in Mark. The passage is a longer form of v. 31–32.

This is the highest word ever uttered on marriage. Jewish law goes back to a time when the man regarded the woman as simply a piece of property with certain uses, which might be kept or discarded at the owner's pleasure, murder only being disallowed. The Deuteronomic Law, quoted in ver. 7 (Deuteronomy xxiv. 1), was an amelioration of the woman's state, and conferred on her a certain right. If she were simply dismissed, her lot would be hard indeed, for no other man would dare to take her into his household, and she is therefore to be provided with a **separation-notice**, or certificate, stating that she is no longer claimed by her husband, and is therefore

under no obligation or tie to him. It is therefore possible for any other man to take possession of her without infringing the rights of the former owner, and he can use her in a fashion which would have exposed him to the penalty of adultery if she had still been the property of someone else. No misfortune is so justly dreaded in the East as to be an unattached woman, and the purpose of the provision is to enable her to find a fresh home, and a new place in the community.

But Jesus puts the whole subject on a different footing. Though Matthew makes an exception in the rigidity of the law, it was not in his source, and Jesus seems to have regarded the marriage bond as absolutely indissoluble throughout life. The bond between the pair lies in the nature of creation, and is the work of Him who created them male and female from the beginning. It is therefore the very holiest thing in the physical life of man ; it is none other than *God* who *has joined* the two together, and made them no longer separate, but complementary parts of a single entity. That which they have given to one another is the most sacred thing they possess, and for either to bestow it on a third party is nothing less than sacrilege. The principle applies equally to both sexes ; it is part of the supreme value of the teaching of Jesus on this subject that he refused to make any distinction between the man and the woman. And for any human authority to step in and recognize the sacrilege formally and officially is to Jesus a horrible thing ; it is nothing less than the direct undoing of God's own work. Truly there speaks here one greater than even Hosea.

This is a hard saying, for all nations and every form of civilization have recognized divorce on one ground or another. The evangelist adds a short dialogue between Jesus and the disciples. If marriage is so solemn and so binding, then surely it would be a wise thing not to marry at all ? The answer of Jesus is somewhat obscure, but probably the interpretation given in the text above is correct. It is not everybody who can rise to the height of sacrifice which perpetual celibacy involves. There are those who have this special gift conferred upon them, but it seems that the number is very

limited. Some, of course, are literally eunuchs, and are physically incapable of marriage, but there are others who eschew marriage from purely spiritual principles, and if they are able to do so, by all means let them. It is impossible not to feel that this attitude is not wholly consistent with that which Jesus adopts elsewhere, and there is in many minds a suspicion that we have here the opinion of the early church, in all sincerity ascribed to Jesus as the epitome of what they believed his will to be.

13 Then children were brought to him that he might lay his
hands on them and pray over them. The disciples checked
14 the people, but Jesus said to them, 'Let the children alone,
do not stop them from coming to me; the Realm of heaven
15 belongs to such as these.' Then he laid his hands on
them and went upon his way.

The section is taken almost verbally from Mark x. 13–16, except that ver. 15 of that passage has already been used by Matthew, in a modified form, in xviii. 3. This evangelist also omits what to many readers is perhaps the most beautiful touch of all, that Jesus put his arms round the children.

The story has a double value. In the first place it illustrates the character of Jesus. To see him cuddling babies is to receive a light on him which we could ill afford to miss. But we have also a definite statement of his view of the Realm of heaven, and of the strong contrast between his attitude and that of his contemporaries—including his own disciples. People talked a great deal about the Realm, its greatness, its magnificence, the nobility of those who should enter it and take high place in it. And Jesus, picking up a little child, in all its simplicity and possibilities, says, 'This is the kind of person to whom the Realm really belongs.'

16 Up came a man and said to him, 'Teacher, what good deed
17 must I do to gain life eternal?' He said to him, 'Why
do you ask me about what is good? One alone is good.
But if you want to get into Life, keep the commands.'
18 'Which?' he said. Jesus answered, 'The commands,

you shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal,' you shall not bear false witness, honour your 19
father and mother, and *you must love your neighbour as yourself.'* The young man said, 'I have observed all 20
these. What more is wanted?' Jesus said to him, 21
'If you want to be perfect, go and sell your property, give the money to the poor and you shall have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me.' When the 22
young man heard that, he went sadly away, for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, 'I 23
tell you truly, it will be difficult for a rich man to get into the Realm of heaven. I tell you again, it is easier for 24
a camel to get through a needle's eye than for a rich man to get into the Realm of God.' When the disciples heard 25
this they were utterly astounded; they said, 'Who then can possibly be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 26
'This is impossible for men, but anything is possible for God.' Then Peter replied, 'Well, we have left our all 27
and followed you. Now what are we to get?' Jesus 28
said to them, 'I tell you truly, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me shall also sit on twelve thrones to govern the twelve tribes of Israel. Everyone who has left 29
brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands or houses for my name's sake will get a hundred times as much and inherit life eternal. Many who are 30
first shall be last, and many who are last shall be first.

The passage is taken from Mark x. 17–31, with some slight alterations which do not affect the sense. Once more the contrast between two ideals of the Kingdom is set before us. In the last paragraph we saw who was fit for the Kingdom; here we are warned who is not fit. Again we realize how paradoxical the whole teaching must have seemed to those who listened. A wealthy man is an important man all over the world, and is held in a certain respect, not because of his real personality, but because of his possible influence. Such a recruit would surely have been welcomed by a revolutionary

leader, the more gladly because of the use his money might be to the cause. Jesus takes exactly the opposite view. The man himself is not unacceptable. He has lived up to the light he has had and observed all the commands he knew, and in Mark we are told that Jesus loved him, but he has one fatal disqualification. Strangely enough, it is the very thing which, judging on ordinary standards, would have made him a particularly desirable recruit—his property.

This illustrates the whole attitude of Jesus towards money. It is sometimes supposed that he condemned riches on economic grounds ; it was a bad thing for property to be concentrated in the hands of a few, and would lead to oppression of the less privileged people. But that is not his real objection. He considers far less the harm that a man's money may do to others than the fatal injury which it inflicts on himself. To be rich is an appalling peril, and if a man wishes to enter the Kingdom, his first step must be to get rid of what he has. The ownership of material property will inevitably mean that the man is concerned with the merely physical, to the neglect of the spiritual. In so far as a man had money, he was the less a real man ; he had unnecessary and dangerous links with the ' world,' and ' faith ' was the harder. Jesus does not ask the youth to give him his wealth. It does not greatly matter what becomes of it ; it will be better for him to give it to the poor, because then there can be no return and no recovery. The point is that the applicant must get rid of it, so that he may enter the Kingdom as a man and as nothing more—or rather as nothing less. Ordinary opinion thinks of a rich man as a superman ; Jesus thinks of him as sub-human, because there is too much ' thing ' in his composition, and therefore too little ' person.'

So paradoxical is the point of view that people have tried in all manner of ways to escape it, and most readers are familiar with the suggestions that the needle's eye is a small postern gate in Jerusalem, or that the camel is a confusion for a ' cable.' There does not seem to be the slightest justification for either of these or for any other attempt to get rid of the direct lesson. Jesus takes the largest of known animals and

the smallest of familiar holes, and he means to imply that the thing is an impossibility. Of course we can always fall back on the doctrine of omnipotence, and say that nothing is impossible to God ; but how far was Jesus serious when he added this remark ? He would agree, of course, that no miracle is impossible for God, but a miracle is something on which no man can safely rely. Moreover, it is far from clear that he meant this doctrine to apply to the salvation of the rich man in particular. The disciples are amazed that such a person is not welcomed. He would, they think, have the best chance of all, and if he cannot succeed, what hope have less favoured mortals ? The answer of Jesus surely is that in the divine sphere the whole situation is reversed, and that the most unlikely things may be, not merely possible through a miracle, but even in themselves natural.

The greater part of ver. 28 is inserted by this evangelist, and there can be little hesitation in attributing the addition to his eschatological interests. It is enough to note that the man who has left all for Jesus has adequate compensations. Elsewhere Jesus has spoken of the range of his own family ties, and these he now applies to all his followers. They, too, will find themselves in a new sphere and a new order, in which there is at least as much of value as that which they have abandoned.

XX.

For the Realm of heaven is like a householder who went 1
out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vine-
yard ; and after agreeing with the labourers to pay them 2
a shilling a day he sent them into his vineyard. Then, 3
on going out at nine o'clock he noticed some other
labourers standing in the marketplace doing nothing ;
to them he said, "You go into the vineyard too, and I 4
will give you whatever wage is fair." So they went in. 5
Going out again at twelve o'clock and at three o'clock,
he did the same thing. And when he went out at five 6
o'clock he came upon some others who were standing ;
he said to them, "Why have you stood doing nothing all
the day ?" "Because nobody hired us," they said. He 7

told them, "You go into the vineyard too." Now when
evening came the master of the vineyard said to his
bailiff, "Summon the labourers and pay them their wages,
beginning with the last and going on to the first." When
those who had been hired about five o'clock came, they
got a shilling each. So when the first labourers came up,
they supposed they would get more; but they too got
each their shilling. And on getting it they grumbled
at the householder. "These last," they said, "have only
worked a single hour, and yet you have ranked them equal
to us who have borne the brunt of the day's work and the
heat!" Then he replied to one of them, "My man, I
am not wronging you. Did you not agree with me for
a shilling? Take what belongs to you and be off. I
choose to give this last man the same as you. Can I
not do as I please with what belongs to me? Have you
a grudge because I am generous?" So shall the last be
first and the first last.'

This parable is not found in any other gospel, and it has a touch of eschatology which makes it particularly suitable to the purposes of this evangelist, and owes its position to the fact that the labourers last engaged are first paid. At the same time it illustrates the difference between the standards with which men were familiar and those of the new Realm. There are three classes of workers. The first have agreed with the householder for a shilling, and can rely on the commercial honesty of their employer. The second class are told, 'I will give you whatever wage is fair,' and may trust his general sense of justice; but the third group simply receive the order, 'You go into the vineyard too.' They can earn very little, not only because their time is short, but also because they are obviously the least fit of the labourers. Yet they were willing to work, and in the sight of Jesus should receive a living wage. This may not be strict justice, but Jesus meets the complaint of the man who has borne the brunt of the day's work and the heat with a double argument. In the first place, the employer has kept his word with this

man, and that is all he had a right to expect ; what the master does with others is no concern of his. But, further, no man should have a grudge because the lord is generous—literally, good. In other words, justice is something less than justice unless it is something more. An economic balance of rights is never wholly fair to the demands of personality.

The novelty of the new principle is emphasized by the repetition of a phrase which has already occurred at the end of chap. xix. Probably neither context is original, but Matthew found it suitable to both.

Now as Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem he took the 17
twelve aside by themselves and said to them as they were
on the road, 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and the 18
Son of man will be betrayed to the high priest and scribes ;
they will sentence him to death and hand him over to the 19
Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified ; then
on the third day he will be raised.'

This announcement of the coming sufferings of Jesus is taken from Mark x. 32–34. In the original passage, however, the setting is far more dramatic, for the statement follows a glimpse of the awe which fell on those who accompanied Jesus. For the moment his mind was unoccupied with other things, and the thought of what lay before him rose to the surface, first manifesting itself in his face, then breaking into speech. This evangelist, however, is not interested in all this ; he is concerned to insist that Jesus knew beforehand all that would befall him, and, therefore, retains what is to him the essence of the incident. To earlier predictions we now have an added detail, **the high priests and scribes will . . . hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified.**

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedaeus came up to him with 20
her sons, praying him for a favour. He said to her, 21
'What do you want ?' She said, 'Give orders that my
two sons are to sit at your right hand and at your left in
your Realm.' Jesus replied, 'You do not know what you 22

are asking. Can you drink the cup I am going to drink ? '
23 They said to him, 'We can.' 'You shall drink my cup,'
said Jesus, ' but it is not for me to grant seats at my right
hand and at my left ; these belong to the men for whom
24 they have been destined by my Father.' When the ten
heard of this, they were angry at the two brothers, but
25 Jesus called them and said,

'You know the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them,
and their great men overbear them :
26 not so with you.
Whoever wants to be great among you must be your
servant,
27 and whoever wants to be first among you must be your
slave ;
28 just as the Son of man has not come to be served but to
serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Taken from Mark x. 35–45, with very slight compression and verbal alteration. Jesus gives another illustration of the difference in standards between the old and the new conceptions of the Realm. He and his followers are on the way to Jerusalem, and, clearly, everyone, disregarding Jesus' own persistent prophecies of disaster, looks forward to the proclamation and establishment of the Realm there. There naturally arises the question, ' Who is to take the highest place amongst the officials ? ' Rank and precedence amongst the Twelve have already been hotly debated, and they have failed to appreciate the meaning of what Jesus himself has had to say on the subject. Now the opportunity comes to speak with greater strength and clearness. He asks the aspirants—for it is clear that the mother is introduced by this evangelist merely in order to do something to save the reputation of the apostles, and she disappears after the opening sentences—whether they can drink his cup. This seems, of course, to them to be a preliminary to the necessary promise, and they must have felt trapped when they found that the desired privilege could not be conferred on them. The only

priority possible was a priority in suffering. The indignation of the ten shews that they were no better than the two. All alike wanted the premier position, and they felt that these brothers had taken an unfair advantage of them. This makes it possible for Jesus to reiterate to them all an old lesson. The whole order of social life and repute is to be inverted. In the East the '**great**' person—the *burra Sahib*—is marked by the fact that he gives orders to all and obeys none, and by the service that all are bound to render him. His status is judged by the number of people who **serve** him, and if he be really **great** he will never expect to do anything for himself. Not only does he control his business or his estates with orders, but he is surrounded by personal attendants, who dress him, feed him, carry him, ministering to all his direct needs. He who has to **serve** another is necessarily an inferior, and stands in the social scale far lower than those who execute more general commands.

In the new order all this is changed. He who would attain to high position must be prepared to perform the menial duties of a personal attendant. The lower his duties, the higher will be his real position. The principle must be carried to its logical extreme. There is a class of human beings who, socially and politically, do not properly rank as human. They have few if any legal rights, and they are liable to be treated in most respects as domestic animals or machines. Naturally they fall below the very meanest of free servants, for they have no right to self-determination at all, and have to live entirely at the will of another. Yet so complete is the inversion of the social pyramid that it is now the very **slave** who stands at the apex. It is he whose whole life is lived in service for which he can claim neither credit nor reward who attains to the summit, and is held **first** in the Realm.

The lesson is pointed by the example of Jesus himself. Ver. 28 is a text familiar to the doctrinal theologian, and needs little elucidation here. We have, as elsewhere, the ambiguity involved in the word **life**, which, once more, is probably equivalent to a reflexive pronoun. But the sense of the verse in its immediate context seems to be that Jesus

is not merely ready to offer rather than to receive menial service, but that he descends even below the level of the slave to that of the sacrificial animal, and to be slain as a redemptive victim. If the theological import of the words is to be pressed, it should be noted that the word **ransom** is not one of the terms used in connexion with the sin-offering. There are certain people and things which in the nature of the case are 'holy,' and must be withdrawn from human use, i.e. sacrificed. Such are the first-born of all animals, men included. In relations between man and man there are sometimes events or situations which may have similar effects. The owner of an ox which has killed someone may, in certain circumstances, be held to have forfeited his life to the avenger of blood. An individual or a people in slavery is also at the complete disposal of others. '**Ransom**' is properly the rescue of a person or animal in such a situation as this. Unclean animals could not be sacrificed, nor could men; a sacrificial animal might be offered for them. A money payment might be accepted by the avenger of blood or by the owner of a slave, who thereby abandoned his claims. But nowhere in Jewish thought is the term used of a fine for sin, or for the substitution of the sin-victim for the sinner. The primary idea seems to be that of rescue from some danger or from some enemy. It is worth while noting—what is still clearer later—that Jesus did feel that his death had a bearing on the spiritual life of humanity. He did not die unwillingly or by accident. He planned his sufferings, because he felt that there was something of priceless value which could only be achieved for mankind through his offering of himself. From the first, his Cross had a meaning.

29 As they were leaving Jericho a crowd followed him, and when
30 two blind men who were sitting beside the road heard Jesus
was passing, they shouted, 'O Lord, Son of David, have
31 pity on us!' The crowd checked them and told them to
be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, 'O Lord, Son of
32 David, have pity on us!' So Jesus stopped and called
them. He said, 'What do you want me to do for you?'
33 'Lord,' they said, 'we want our eyes opened.' Then

Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and they regained their 34
sight at once and followed him.

This narrative is slightly abbreviated from Mark x. 46–52, and still further differs from its source, in that two blind men are mentioned instead of one. This may be due to confusion or to misreading of the text of Mark.

Unless we include the healing of the wounded man in the Garden of Gethsemane (recorded by Luke alone) and the withering of the barren fig tree, this is the last miracle of Jesus given in detail in the Synoptic Gospels. The time for miracles was past. He had reached the end of his last journey, and was about to consummate his life in Jerusalem. He had little to add to what he had already told his disciples ; the greater part of the closing chapters of the gospel consists of public preaching and action which explain and illustrate the events which immediately led to his death. The disciples had at least learned to recognize him as the Messiah, and that had to be sufficient. All that remained to him was to die, and to die in such fashion that there could be no mistake in men's minds as to the nature of his death. For the first time Jesus, as it were, steps out openly to the front of the stage, and deliberately chooses the part of a public character. He must die as the Messiah, and as a Messiah rejected and forsaken of all men. But it would seem that in this final act the healing powers were unneeded, and the claim made upon them was weak or absent. With the restoration of the blind here recorded, the penultimate stage of the earthly life of Jesus is brought to a close.

D. CHAPS. XXI.–XXV.: JESUS IN JERUSALEM

The narrative of Mark is followed somewhat closely, though a good deal more material has been used, especially in eschatological passages.

I. xxi.–xxii.: THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHRIST xxi.

When they came near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage 1
at the Hill of Olives, then Jesus despatched two disciples,

2 saying to them, 'Go to the village in front of you and you will at once find an ass tethered with a colt alongside of
3 her; untether them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you will say that the Lord needs them;
4 then he will at once let them go.' This took place for the fulfilment of what had been spoken by the prophet,

5 *Tell the daughter of Sion,*
'Here is your king coming to you,
He is gentle and mounted on an ass,
And on a colt the foal of a beast of burden.'

6 So the disciples went and did as Jesus told them; they brought
7 the ass and the colt and put their clothes on them. Jesus
8 seated himself on them, and the greater part of the crowd spread their clothes on the road, while others cut branches
9 from the trees and strewed them on the road. And the crowds who went in front of him and who followed behind shouted,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed be he who comes in the Lord's name!
Hosanna in high heaven!'

10 When he entered Jerusalem the whole city was in excite-
11 ment over him. 'Who is this?' they said, and the crowds replied, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazaret in Galilee!'

Both abbreviated and expanded from Mark xi. 1–10. Mark's colt has become an ass tethered with a colt alongside of her, doubtless owing to a desire to make the detailed events fit the prophecy quoted from Zechariah ix. 9. This, of course, is due to a misunderstanding of the text of Zechariah, where only one animal is intended. But the parallelism characteristic of Hebrew poetry introduces it twice, giving a slightly different description each time. Whilst the evangelist did not find the quotation in his source, we may take it for granted that he was right in adding it. This was one of the recognized messianic passages, and it seems clear that Jesus chose this style of entering the city in order to make a definite and

public claim of his Messiahship. Till the point when he started on the last journey, he had concealed his function as much as possible ; but now his death was near, and his plans demanded that all the world should know that it was as the Messiah that he died. His disciples, and perhaps others, had recognized him as the coming Christ ; he had to prove to them that in the Realm of God things were not as they were in human empires. The greatest of all Kings was not to be a victorious warrior, destroying his enemies and those of his people by miraculous means, but a sufferer who was to endure the most shameful and terrible death possible to a man. For the lesson to have its full effect he must be admitted to be the Messiah, and throughout this short time in Jerusalem every public act and word presented the messianic claim. At the outset that claim is admitted, and two familiar messianic titles are applied to him, **'the Son of David'** and **'he who comes.'** The question of the people of Jerusalem and the answer which they receive are added by Matthew, but they probably represent quite fairly the state of the city on his arrival.

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all who 12
were buying and selling inside the temple ; he upset the tables of the money-changers and the stalls of those who sold doves, and told them, 'It is written, *My house shall* 13
***be called a house of prayer*, but you make it *a den of robbers*.'**

As usual, the narrative of Mark has been abbreviated, and the whole event has been placed a day earlier than in the source. The most important omission appears in the quotation from Isaiah lvi., the words 'for all nations' being omitted. We are fortunate in being able to turn to Mark as the original, for on these words much of the force of the action of Jesus depends. They imply that the temple of God was the only place where man could enter into full communion with God through sacrifice, and the 'court of the Gentiles' (whence they could see the great altar through the inner gates) was used for all this indiscriminate commerce. But the quotation of Jesus from Jeremiah vii. 11 suggests a more serious charge.

We know that the temple was sanctuary for any Jew who had wronged a Gentile, and it would be natural to suspect in any case that those who did business there were normally men who had strong reasons for keeping within easy reach of sanctuary. The suspicion becomes a practical certainty when we hear Jesus say that the universal **house of prayer** has become a **den of robbers.** It is in their den that **robbers** take shelter from those who would punish them for their crimes. Therefore the traders in the temple also are there because they cannot face the results of their misdeeds elsewhere. Instead of recognizing their universal mission, and making their worship available for all men to worship the one living and true God, the Jewish leaders are allowing the place to be a mere shelter for malefactors. Instead of using their privileges to spread the knowledge of a pure and moral religion, they are making iniquity possible and easy by sheltering it from its due penalty. Perhaps the strongest condemnation Jesus ever passed on contemporary Judaism.

14 **Blind and lame people came up to him in the temple and he**
15 **healed them. But when the high priests and scribes saw his wonderful deeds and saw the children who shouted in the temple, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they**
16 **were indignant; they said to him, 'Do you hear what they are saying?' 'Yes,' said Jesus, 'have you never read,** *Thou hast brought praise to perfection from*
17 *the mouth of babes and sucklings'*? **Then he left them and went outside the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.**

Mark mentions no miracle done in Jerusalem. But Matthew regarded miracle as an indispensable evidence of Messiahship, and therefore includes it in his narrative. He also adds the hostility expressed by the **high priests and scribes** to the **shouting children.** Luke has a parallel, though rather different, note in the account of the triumphal entry. There it is the followers of Jesus whose praises are the subject of complaint, and Jesus replies that if men were silent, the very stones would cry out. We notice again that the incident is

supported by a quotation, this time from Psalm viii. 2. It is interesting to observe that the quotation is from the LXX, not from the Hebrew text, which has 'established strength' instead of brought praise to perfection. The hostility of the leaders of the people is already prominent.

In the morning as he came back to the city he felt hungry, 18
and noticing a fig tree by the roadside he went up to it, 19
but found nothing on it except leaves. He said to it,
'May no fruit ever come from you after this!' And
instantly the fig tree withered up. When the disciples 20
saw this they marvelled. 'How did the fig tree wither
up in an instant?' they said. Jesus answered, 'I tell 21
you truly, if you have faith, if you have no doubt, you will
not only do what has been done to the fig tree but even
if you say to this hill, "Take and throw yourself into the
sea," it will be done. All that ever you ask in prayer you 22
shall have, if you believe.'

Again the narrative of Mark xi. 13–14, 20–25 has undergone changes, though it is clearly the source used by this evangelist. The alterations, significantly enough, are such as will tend to heighten the miraculous element. In Mark Jesus finds the fig tree and speaks to it early in the morning, as he is going from Bethany into Jerusalem. Late in the evening, as he and his disciples are returning, they see that it has withered. This leaves open the possibility that the words of Jesus have been misunderstood, and that he saw as he looked at the tree that it was soon to die. But the account in Matthew makes this impossible, for it withers up instantly, as soon as Jesus speaks. But both evangelists make the incident the text for a little lesson on faith. If, with no doubt in his heart, a man were to say, not only to the fig tree but even to the whole hill on which it had grown, 'Take and throw yourself into the sea,' it would be done. But was Jesus speaking seriously? Could any man say this and have no doubt? Is it not rather a general rebuke to men, who always have doubt instead of faith, when confronted by a task which seems impossible?

The whole narrative has aroused serious questions in many

minds. Even if the miracle be admitted, its performance seems to cast a slur on the character of Jesus, for the Marcan narrative implies that he cursed it because he was disappointed at being unable to satisfy his hunger from it. Two lines of defence are commonly offered. It is suggested that this was an 'acted parable,' and that the destruction of a single fig tree was well worth while if the disciples could be taught the lesson that they must be spiritually fruitful or perish. Jesus sees in the 'pretentiousness' of the tree full of leaves, but bearing no fruit, a picture of Judaism as he knew it. Professor Duncan has suggested (privately) that there is a reference to Hosea ix. 10, 16. On the other hand, it is sometimes held that a parable, something like that now found in Luke xiii. 6–9, has been transformed into a miracle by tradition. Perhaps the suggestion made above is more satisfactory than either. Jesus could hardly have expected to find fruit in the early spring—Mark definitely states that it was not the time of figs—and he may well have seen signs of decay close at hand which were not perceptible at a distance. In that case his words were misunderstood by the disciples, for Aramaic does not use a separate optative or jussive form, and Jesus must have employed the simple imperfect, equivalent either to a future or to an optative. In the sequel he accepts the opportunity offered by the misunderstanding to give a short lesson on faith.

23 When he entered the temple, the high priests and elders of
the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said,
'What authority have you for acting in this way? Who
24 gave you this authority?' Jesus replied, 'Well, I will
ask you a question, and if you answer me, then I will tell
25 you what authority I have for acting as I do. Where
did the baptism of John come from? From heaven or
from men?' Now they argued to themselves, 'If we
say, "From heaven," he will say to us, "Then why did
26 you not believe him?" And if we say, "From men,"
we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was
27 a prophet.' So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.'

He said to them, 'No more will I tell you what authority I have for acting as I do. Tell me what you think. 28 A man had two sons. He went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today"; he replied, 29 "I will go, sir," but he did not go. The man went to the 30 second and said the same to him; he replied, "I will not," but afterwards he changed his mind and did go. Which 31 of the two did the will of the father?' They said, 'The last.' Jesus said to them, 'I tell you truly, the taxgatherers and harlots are going into the Realm of God before you. For John showed you the way to be 32 good and you would not believe him; the taxgatherers and harlots believed him, and even though you saw that, you would not change your mind afterwards and believe him.

To the original passage (Mark xi. 27–33) the evangelist has added the parable of the two sons, which is not found elsewhere. It was almost inevitable that the action of Jesus in cleansing the temple should be challenged. The messianic claim involved in it was just as strong as that of the triumphal entry into the city. It was only natural that the high priests and elders of the people should inquire by what authority Jesus did things so startling and violent. They were the guardians of the sanctuary, and as a rule nothing could be done there without their consent. The answer that Jesus gives to them is practically a new assertion of his own claims. He does not say that he has an authority superior to theirs, but he proves that there are subjects on which they are not qualified to speak. They are no judges of authority, for they cannot pass an opinion on so obvious an instance as that of John. On authority derived from tradition, or even from written law, they may be competent to decide, but these are mechanical things, and they are quite incapable of understanding or appraising that which reveals the presence of the free Spirit of God. It is significant that as they debate their answer, the consideration that moves them is not that they may state the truth, but the consequences that may follow their reply. **'If we say, "From heaven," he will say to us, "Then why did**

you not believe him ? " And if we say, " From men," we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.' This is not the language of men who know themselves competent to decide a genuinely religious question, and the very attitude, could they but have realized it, proved that they had no right to challenge such a one as Jesus.

The parable which follows is too obvious to need expansion, and its application is equally clear. The religious leaders, who profess to do the will of God, say, ' I will go, sir,' but do not go ; the classes who make no profession of religion refuse, but afterwards change their mind and do go.

33 Listen to another parable, There was a householder who *planted a vineyard, put a fence round it, dug a wine-vat inside it, and built a watch-tower :* then he leased it to
34 vinedressers and went abroad. When the fruit-season was near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers to
35 collect his fruit ; but the vinedressers took his servants and flogged one, killed another, and stoned a third.
36 Once more he sent some other servants, more than he had
37 sent at first, and they did the same to them. Afterwards he sent them his son ; " They will respect my son," he
38 said. But when the vinedressers saw his son they said to themselves, " Here is the heir ; come on, let us kill him
39 and seize his inheritance ! " So they took and threw
40 him outside the vineyard and killed him. Now, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to these
41 vinedressers ? ' They replied, ' He will utterly destroy the wretches and lease the vineyard to other vinedressers
42 who will give him the fruits in their season.' Jesus said to them, ' Have you never read in the scriptures,

The stone that the builders rejected
is the chief stone now of the corner :
this is the doing of the Lord,
and a wonder to our eyes ?

43 I tell you therefore that the Realm of God will be taken from you and given to a nation that bears the fruits of the Realm.

[Everyone who falls on this stone will be shattered, 44
and whoever it falls upon will be crushed.] '

When the high priests and Pharisees heard these parables 45
they knew he was speaking about them ; they tried to 46
get hold of him, but they were afraid of the crowds, as
the crowds held him to be a prophet.

This parable is taken from Mark xii. 1–12, with the addition of vers. 43–44. Jesus leaves his hearers in no doubt as to his meaning, for he starts with language which suggests the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah v. 1–7. The application is reinforced by the quotation from Psalm cxviii. 22–23, a recognized messianic passage, in which rabbinic exegesis saw a reference to Abraham, David, and the coming Messiah in turn. The Targum of the Psalm, too, renders the phrase **the chief stone . . . of the corner** as ' king and lord.' There is some ground for the omission of ver. 44, since it is lacking in some of the oldest witnesses to the text, and its excision leaves the natural connexion between vers. 43 and 45 uninterrupted. The concluding sentence, stating that the magnates were unable to touch Jesus because **they were afraid of the crowds**, suggests that this short ministry in Jerusalem was likely to run the same course as that of Galilee : first the general popularity, with a growing hostility on the part of the authorities, which, if allowed to have free opportunity, would end in the destruction of Jesus.

xxii.

Then Jesus again addressed them in parables. ' The Realm 1
of heaven,' he said, ' may be compared to a king who 2
gave a marriage-banquet in honour of his son. He sent 3
his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast,
but they would not come. Once more he sent some 4
other servants, saying, " Tell the invited guests, here is
my supper all prepared, my oxen and fat cattle are killed,
everything is ready, come to the marriage-banquet."
But they paid no attention and went off, one to his estate, 5
another to his business, while the rest seized his servants and 6
ill-treated them and killed them. The king was enraged ; 7

he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and
8 burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, "The
marriage-banquet is all ready, but the invited guests
9 did not deserve it. So go to the byeways and invite
10 anyone you meet to the marriage-banquet." And those
servants went out on the roads and gathered all they met,
bad and good alike. Thus the marriage-banquet was
11 supplied with guests. Now when the king came in to view
his guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in a
12 wedding-robe. So he said to him, "My man, how did you
get in here without a wedding-robe?" The man was
13 speechless. Then said the king to his servants, "Take
him hand and foot, and throw him outside, out into the
darkness; there men will wail and gnash their teeth.
14 For many are invited but few are chosen."'

There seems to be here a parable which is, perhaps, better represented in Luke xiv. 16–24. If the two are originally identical, then this gospel shews a certain development from the earlier form. The most striking difference is the addition of a second part, the parable of the guest who had no wedding garment, which has a strongly eschatological tone, and may, without hesitation, be attributed to the circle of thought which this evangelist represents. But this is far from being the only modification. The giver of the feast in Luke is a simple citizen, and there is no special occasion for it. The rabbinic mind, however, dwelt readily on kings, and there is more than one instance in the Talmud where the fate of the righteous and the wicked after death is illustrated by a parable of a banquet given by a king to his subjects. Here the occasion is the marriage of the king's son, one of the most important of all civic festivals. The suggestion is that the king is faced with a proud and seditious aristocracy, who take the opportunity of slighting him. Not only so, but they aggravate their conduct by the injuries they inflict on his servants, and he punishes them by destroying both them and their city. This, again, is a stronger and more distinctly eschatological presentation than that of Luke, where the guests are punished

simply by being excluded. But this evangelist has in mind the rejection of the prophets, the messengers who had invited Israel to partake of the great privileges offered to their people, and when **those servants went out and gathered all they met, bad and good alike,** they typified the gospel and its preachers, who summon all men to accept the privileges which have been rejected by the Jews.

The second part of the parable deals with **a man . . . who was not dressed in a wedding-robe.** This addition has all the appearance of being due to the experience of the Christian church. Men heard and accepted the divine invitation, and entered the church, but failed to conform to its moral and spiritual standards. Their mere presence within the circle was not enough to secure them entrance into heaven ; they must be worthy members of the community to which they claimed to belong. The closing sentence, **many are invited but few are chosen,** grates somewhat harshly on a western ear, for it seems to imply that the failure of the guest to comply with the demands of the occasion was the fault of the host. But it must be remembered that the eastern mind, with its overwhelming insistence on the omnipotent will of God, tends almost inevitably to a doctrine of predestination. Further, the difficulty is partly (though not wholly) removed when we realize that the invitation is general and not individual. It is not as if God were represented as summoning A and B by name, and then later casting them off. The call is the universal appeal which comes through the public preaching of the gospel, and if there are comparatively few of the hearers who accept it with all their heart and soul, God is hardly to be blamed for the rejection of the rest. It would seem that this remark is a general principle recognized by Jesus, and that it has no necessary connexion with its present context.

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to trap him in talk. They 15
sent him their disciples with the Herodians, who said, 16
' Teacher, we know you are sincere and that you teach the Way of God honestly and fearlessly ; you do not court human favour. Tell us, then, what you think about this. 17

18 **Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But Jesus**
detected their malice. He said, 'Why do you tempt me,
19 **you hypocrites? Show me the coin for taxes.' So they**
20 **brought him a shilling. Then Jesus said to them, 'Whose**
21 **likeness, whose inscription is this?' 'Caesar's,' they**
said. Then he told them, 'Give Caesar what belongs to
22 **Caesar, give God what belongs to God.' When they heard**
that they marvelled; then they left him and went away.

The obvious attack made by Jesus on the leaders of the people has roused them against him. They cannot proceed openly, as has already been explained, for fear of the people. But there are still two courses before them. They may succeed in entrapping him into language which will make him unpopular, and so deprive him of the protection afforded by the crowd. Or they may extract from him some utterance which can be construed as treason against the Roman government, and so we have the same combination as we have seen already in Galilee, the Pharisees and the Herodians. The narrative differs very little from that of Mark (xii. 13–17), and, as it consists mainly of conversation, is hardly even abbreviated. The point of the question is obvious. When Jesus was asked, **Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?** it is clear that if he answered 'Yes,' he would lose favour with the crowd; if he said 'No,' he could be charged with treason. Either reply would satisfy one group of his questioners, but would give the other a handle against him. So he gives no direct reply at all, but throws the responsibility back on them. **Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, give God what belongs to God,** is apparently an ethical platitude. Everybody knows that this is right; the real question is to decide what does belong to Caesar, and that Jesus referred back to the inquirers. But there is a deeper meaning; Jesus does not want mere antagonists of Caesar, he wants men who will live and die for God.

23 **That same day some Sadducees came up to him, men who hold**
there is no resurrection. They put this question to him:
24 **'Teacher, Moses said that** *if anyone dies without children,*

his brother is to espouse his wife and raise offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers in our number. 25
The first married and died ; as he had no children he left
his wife to his brother. The same happened with the second 26
and the third, down to the seventh. After them all, the 27
woman died. Now at the resurrection whose wife will 28
she be ? They all had her.' Jesus answered them, 29
'You go wrong because you understand neither the
scriptures nor the power of God. At the resurrection 30
people neither marry nor are married, they are like the
angels of God in heaven. And as for the resurrection of 31
the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God,
I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the 32
God of Jacob ? He is not a God of dead people but of
living.' And when the crowds heard it, they were 33
astounded at his teaching.

The attempt of the Sadducees, the conservative, priestly party, to entrap Jesus, is taken almost verbatim from Mark xii. 18–27. The question is intended to cast scorn on the Pharisee doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and clearly the Sadducees suppose that Jesus shares the Pharisee view. His reply, however, leaves this uncertain. **You understand neither the scriptures nor the power of God. . . . They are like the angels of God in heaven.** Does this mean that Jesus definitely shared the belief in the restoration of the physical frame ? More probably we are to understand that this view is held by him to be erroneous, and that, like Paul after him, he thought of the life after death as non-material—like that of the angels. A hint of this belief appears in some of the later rabbinic writings (third century), where it is stated that there the appetites and instincts of the physical body have ceased to exist, but this may be due to Christian influence. This interpretation is reinforced by his positive proof of the resurrection—or rather of the life after death. **Have you not read what was said to you by God, *I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob* ? He is not a God of dead people but of living.** The words are cited

from the Law (Exodus iii. 6), which the Sadducees professed to accept as the inspired Word of God. The logic of Jesus is irresistible. If God is their God, they must still be living. They are not merely dormant ; that would not meet the case. God is just as much to them now as He was when they lived a bodily life, and their connexion with Him is as real as it ever was or ever will be.

It was, after all, here that Jesus set the coping-stone on all the arguments for a life after death. Since Habakkuk first asked the question which started men thinking about the justice of God as manifested in the government of human affairs, Israel had steadily progressed towards the thought that the rectification of all injustice must take place after death, since it obviously did not appear invariably in this life. The thought is first adumbrated in the book of Job ; in Daniel it reaches that more developed form in which righteous and wicked alike are brought back to earth to receive the proper reward of their deeds. This, however, is a physical resurrection, and the characteristically Hebrew conception held the field in popular eschatology. It was a doctrine based essentially on the justice of God. In Psalm lxxiii. we have a hint of another line of thought, for the poet feels that he must enjoy the friendship of God even though the physical frame has been destroyed. It is this, the logical issue of all true mystical experience of God, which Jesus stresses and completes. If a man has known the real friendship of his Father, then he may be certain that this experience will be as enduring as the Father Himself. Such a God as Jesus understood and revealed can never allow a physical event like death to interrupt the communion between Himself and any of His children. That communion is not material, nor based on the experience of the material ; God is spirit, and the true relation with Him is spiritual. God's friends cannot die till He dies Himself.

34 When the Pharisees heard he had silenced the Sadducees, they
35 mustered their forces, and one of them, a jurist, put a
36 question in order to tempt him. 'Teacher,' he said,

'what is the greatest command in the Law?' He replied, 37
***'You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with your whole mind.* This is 38**
the greatest and chief command. There is a second like 39
it; *you must love your neighbour as yourself.* The whole 40
Law and the prophets hang upon these two commands.'

The narrative is abbreviated from Mark xii. 28–34, and is given a new presentation. In the original document the inquirer, a scribe, is apparently honest in his desire to win an authoritative pronouncement from Jesus on an important point—many of the most famous rabbis tried to sum up the essential principle of the Law in a single phrase. Here the Pharisees find that all parties have failed in their attempts to entrap Jesus, so they mustered their forces, and one of them, a jurist, put a question in order to tempt him. The rabbis (with the aid of some of that curious alphabetic calculation known as Gematria) counted 613 'commands' in the Law, of which 248 were positive orders, and 365 prohibitions. Inasmuch as circumstances might arise in which different commands clashed, it was necessary to know which was the greater, for the greater obviously took precedence over the less. It was usual to believe that the 'greater' were those sanctioned by the severer penalties. But Jesus took another view. The greatest commands were those which explained and carried with them the rest, and he was able to sum up the whole in a pair of sayings, one of which included all '*fas*,' man's duty to God, the other all '*jus*,' man's duty to man. The latter is elaborated by Paul (Romans xiii. 8 f.), and may have been quoted in this sense by a pre-Christian Jewish writer.

As the Pharisees had mustered, Jesus put a question to them. 41
'Tell me,' he said, 'what you think about the Christ. 42
Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'David's.'
He said to them, 'How is it then that David in the Spirit 43
calls him *Lord*?

The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, 44
till I put your enemies under your feet."

45 If David calls him *Lord*, how can he be his son?' No
46 one could make any answer to him, and from that day no one ventured to put another question to him.

This question is elaborated from Mark xii. 35–37. His enemies had tried to entrap Jesus with puzzles which they hoped he could not solve, and he turned on them with a question to which they could find no answer. His meaning seems to be that while he, the Messiah, might be descended from David (the normal belief of his day), yet there was necessarily in him something more, and even the greatest of the Israelite heroes of the past must take a lower place than he.

II. Chap. xxiii.: Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees

This section leads up to the great eschatological discourse in chaps. xxiv.–xxv. It is a collection of sayings possibly from many sources, inserted in this place because one of them (vers. 6–7*a*) appears in a very short condemnation of the scribes in Mark xii. 38–40. As it stands it falls into four parts: (*a*) description of the scribes and Pharisees (vers. 1–7); (*b*) the contrast presented by the true disciples (vers. 8–12); (*c*) a series of woes (vers. 13–32); (*d*) final denunciation (vers. 33–36), and is followed by the lament over Jerusalem (vers. 37–39).

xxiii.

1 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples. 'The
2 scribes and Pharisees sit on the seat of Moses; so do
3 whatever they tell you, obey them, but do not do as they
4 do. They talk but they do not act. They make up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders but they will
5 not stir a finger to remove them. Besides, all they do is done to catch the notice of men; they make their
6 phylacteries broad, they wear large tassels, they are fond of the best places at banquets and the front seat in the
7 synagogues; they like to be saluted in the marketplaces and to be called "rabbi" by men

The passage is mainly composed of material which does not appear elsewhere, but ver. 4 appears in a slightly different form in Luke xi. 46, and vers. 6–*7a* are taken from Mark xii. 38 f. Jesus has two main causes of complaint against the classes he condemns. The first is that they are concerned to lay down a law which they themselves do not keep, and the second is that they care only for their reputation amongst men. The first charge applies more properly to the scribes, the second includes also the Pharisees. The function of the former was to expound the Law, hence they take the place of Moses—**sit on the seat of Moses.** In their efforts to secure the observance of the Law they had built up a great mass of tradition as to the way in which it was to be observed. Thus there were many things which they ' bound,' i.e. forbade, and these made a load for the backs of the people. But, as Jesus knew them, they made no effort to carry out their own prescriptions. There is nothing wrong in avoiding the acts they forbid, though they do not avoid them themselves, but there is danger in imitating their conduct, for that is marked by far more serious breaches of the principles on which the Law is based. Therefore Jesus says to the people and to his disciples, **' Do whatever they tell you, obey them, but do not do as they do.'** The Pharisees, on the other hand, may do all that the scribes demand, but they do it from a false motive. Their purpose is not to fulfil the Law of God, but to win the praise of men. They want **to catch the notice of men,** and all their actions have that end, and that alone in view. Vers. 5–7 are an extension of the sayings found in vi. 1–18.

But you are not to be called " rabbi," 8
for One is your teacher, and you are all brothers ;
you are not to call anyone " father " on earth, 9
for One is your heavenly Father ;
nor must you be called " leaders," 10
for One is your leader, even the Christ.
He who is greatest among you must be your servant. 11
Whoever uplifts himself will be humbled, 12
and whoever humbles himself will be uplifted.

The contrast is expressed in language which is not wholly found elsewhere, though it is based on an essential principle stated in Mark x. 42–44, and used by this evangelist in xx. 25–27. There are certain titles of honour—'**rabbi**' (**teacher**), '**father**,' '**leader**'—which were often applied to the more prominent men in the religious life of Israel, and implied a superiority of grade and standing in those to whom they were addressed. But the Christian ideal has no room for these, and that for two reasons. In the first place the assumption of these titles is a usurpation of the prerogatives of God and of the Christ—**one is your teacher . . . one is your father . . . one is your leader**; and in the second place it is a violation of the fundamental principle of Christian ethics, namely, that all alike stand on the same level in God's sight, and the only distinction that can be recognized lies in service—waiting on others.

13 **Woe to you, you impious scribes and Pharisees!**
you shut the Realm of heaven in men's faces;
you neither enter yourselves,
nor will you let those enter who are on the point of entering.

15 **Woe to you, you impious scribes and Pharisees!**
you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte,
and when you succeed you make him a son of Gehenna twice as bad as yourselves.

16 **Woe to you, blind guides that you are!**
you say, "Swear by the sanctuary, and it means nothing;
but swear by the gold of the sanctuary, and the oath is binding."

17 **You are senseless and blind! for which is the greater,**
the gold or the sanctuary that makes the gold sacred?

18 **You say again, "Swear by the altar, and it means nothing;**
but swear by the gift upon it, and the oath is binding."

19 **You are blind! for which is the greater,**
the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred?

He who swears by the altar 20
swears by it and by all that lies on it ;
he who swears by the sanctuary 21
swears by it and by Him who inhabits it ;
he who swears by heaven 22
swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.
Woe to you, you impious scribes and Pharisees ! 23
you tithe mint and dill and cummin,
and omit the weightier matter of the law,
justice and mercy and faithfulness ;
these latter you ought to have practised—without omitting the former.
Blind guides that you are, 24
filtering away the gnat and swallowing the camel !
Woe to you, you irreligious scribes and Pharisees ! 25
you clean the outside of the cup and the plate,
but inside they are filled with your rapacity and self-indulgence.
Blind Pharisees ! first clean the inside of the cup, 26
so that the outside may be clean as well.
Woe to you, you irreligious scribes and Pharisees ! 27
you are like tombs whitewashed ;
they look comely on the outside,
but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all manner of impurity.
So to men you seem just, 28
but inside you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.
Woe to you, you irreligious scribes and Pharisees ! You 29
build tombs for the prophets and decorate the tombs of
the just, and you say, " If we had been living in the days 30
of our fathers, we would not have joined them in shedding
the blood of the prophets." So you are witnesses against 31
yourselves, that you are sons of those who killed the
prophets ! And you will fill up the measure that your 32
fathers filled.

These verses form a collection, typical of the methods of this evangelist, of seven ' Woes ' on the religious leaders of the

people, the **scribes and Pharisees.** The Authorized Version of the New Testament includes as ver. 14 a 'Woe' inserted from Mark xii. 40 at a comparatively late period in the history of the text. The second and third have no parallel elsewhere; the rest all appear, in modified forms and in a different order, in Luke xi. 39–52. Luke has six 'Woes,' arranged in groups of three, the first group aimed at the Pharisees, the second at the scribes. Of these six, two have been used already by Matthew (Luke xi. 43 = Matthew xxiii. 6: **the best places at banquets and the front seat in the synagogues**; and Luke xi. 46 = Matthew xxiii. 4: **the heavy loads laid on men's shoulders).** One of the Matthean 'Woes' appears in Luke xi. 39 as a simple accusation. Clearly both writers borrowed the passage from the same source, whose order is more correctly indicated in Luke, though probably in individual sentences Matthew has made fewer changes. At the same time, some of the facts suggest that the common source here was in Aramaic, and that the two evangelists are depending on different Greek translations.

The first of these 'Woes' (ver. 13) is directed against those who **shut the Realm of heaven in men's faces.** The thought is similar to that expressed already in ver. 4. The **impious,** or rather 'hypocritical' scribes laid down a number of rules which must be obeyed by all who would enter the Realm of heaven, shutting the door to those who refused or were unable to keep them all. Yet this was only for the sake of appearances, for the rule-makers themselves valued their rules so little that they themselves made no attempt to keep them—they would not **enter themselves.** More than once Jesus found reason to condemn contemporary Judaism because it failed to offer the world a fair chance of salvation, and no charge could have been more terrible.

The second 'Woe' (ver. 15) is pronounced against those who **traverse land and sea to make one proselyte.** It seems that there was a certain amount of missionary activity amongst the Jews of the Diaspora. Against this, in itself, Jesus has nothing to say; his complaints are rather in the other direction. But he does object to the actual results of this activity.

If the Pharisees whom he met had been examples of the truly religious life as he understood it, their activities would have met with his approval. But all that they did was to make new Pharisees, men who, so far from reaching a genuine moral communion with God, bound themselves to a life of superficial religiosity. It has been suggested that instead of **twice as bad as yourselves** the original saying of Jesus ran ' twice as bad as they had been.' Nobody, least of all Jesus, pretended that the average conduct of the heathen world was at all praiseworthy, but it was human and real, and the downright wicked people always appealed to him as being better than the ' acting ' of men whose only moral criterion was ' what do I look like ? what will people think of me ? '

The third ' Woe ' (vers. 16–22) is directed against the pharisaic casuistry which distinguished between the stringency of various forms of oath. As we have already seen, Jesus saw no value in the oath at all ; but if it must be taken, it should be taken honestly, and there must be no escape on the ground of a quibble. Men swore by **the sanctuary** or **by the altar** or **by heaven,** and the theory was that unless the person who took the oath was conscious of all the details of the object, the oath was not binding. If he swore **by the gold of the sanctuary,** he had a clear idea of the object, and the oath was valid. So also if he swore **by the gift which is on the altar.** But it is in the nature of the oath that it is an appeal to some higher power, and it follows that the object or person from which that power is derived is even more suitable a court of appeal than things which owe their authority to him or to it. So Jesus calls them **blind guides,** because they fail to see the reality that lies behind the superficial language.

The fourth ' Woe ' (ver. 23) is of the same kind, a condemnation of the spirit which is scrupulous in small details, but neglects great principles. The saying occurs in Luke xi. 42 in a slightly different form, omitting **faithfulness** and substituting **love of God** for **mercy.** This last variation is possibly due to an alternative rendering of the original Aramaic, and the passage in Matthew may have been adapted to Micah vi. 8. The rabbis laid it down that everything that grew

from the ground and might be eaten was subject to the law of tithe, and a careful observer of the Law would carry this out into the last detail. Jesus does not condemn this practice—on the contrary, he says, **'these latter ought you to have practised'**—but he insists that men must not regard it as excusing them from more important duties. Here he is directly applying the central principles of the great prophets to the conditions of his own day. From Amos onwards they had insisted that men could not be forgiven for neglect of real moral duties on the ground that they had been careful in their religious observances. The striking image with which the saying concludes, **'Blind guides that you are, filtering away the gnat and swallowing the camel,'** is an interesting illustration of that hyperbole which Jesus sometimes employed to bring home truth. It may be compared with the saying in Mark x. 25 (= Matthew xix. 24), **'It is easier for a camel to get through a needle's eye than for a rich man to get into the Realm of God.'** Neither is meant to be taken literally, but each drives home its lesson with unmistakable power.

The fifth 'Woe' (vers. 25, 26) is paralleled in Luke xi. 39–41, again with slight variation, which may be partly due to a different Greek translation from the Aramaic. There is also, apparently, a misunderstanding on the part of Luke, for while Matthew says **inside they are filled with your rapacity and self-indulgence,** Luke interprets **your inner life is filled with rapacity and malice.** The difference is important. The saying in this gospel does not refer merely to the man's own character, as the Lucan form does, but to the fact that these people ate and drank luxuriously things which they secured by acts of violence and wrong. What they put in their cups was contaminated by the source from which it had come, and it was useless to polish the outside of the vessel, and so meet the demands of the traditional Law. Thus again the epithets **blind** and **irreligious** (the word rendered impious in the earlier 'Woes') are again applied to the Pharisees, and on the same grounds as before.

The sixth 'Woe' (vers. 27, 28) is paralleled in Luke xi. 44, where again the saying is not completely understood and is

interpreted. The reference is to a custom which prevailed in the days of Jesus of whitewashing tombs near Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. This made them look clean, and at the same time warned the public what they were, and everybody knew what was inside them. Luke, on the other hand, assumed that the whitewashing was intended to conceal them, so that men would walk over them and defile themselves in consequence. The original form as Matthew presents it makes the condemnation terrible enough, and falls into line with the rest of the passage.

The seventh 'Woe' (vers. 30–32) appears in a much shorter form in Luke xi. 47, 48. The contemporaries of Jesus **build tombs for the prophets and decorate the tombs of the just,** but their purpose is not simply to honour the great men of the past, it is even more to call attention to their own superiority to their ancestors. They say to the world, as it were, 'See how much better we are than our fathers!—**if we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have joined them in shedding the blood of the prophets.**' On the contrary, says Jesus, the present generation is shewing itself to be the true **sons of those who killed the prophets,** that is to say, in accordance with the usual Semitic idiom, they inherit their character as well as their blood. For, after all, they are but finishing the work which their fathers began—they **will fill up the measure that their fathers filled.**

A retrospect over these 'Woes' makes it clear that in essence they are all concerned with the same principle. The denunciations of Jesus are especially poured out on people who lived to be looked at, whose aim was to secure the applause of their public, whose motive was to be seen of men. To him they were simply actors, playing parts on the stage, not living a real life, but presenting a fiction to the public gaze. So he flung at them the most contemptuous term in his vocabulary—*mummers!* Their failure to achieve reality in life was especially marked by an almost complete lack of logical power. They adopted the part which they had cast for themselves without thinking what it meant—they never thought what anything meant. So they found themselves, or rather

Jesus found them, entangled in all manner of moral absurdities and self-contradictions. Senseless and blind, they played while their world burned about them, and only helped to drag to her final ruin the people whom they might have saved.

33 **You serpents ! you brood of vipers ! how can you escape being**
34 **sentenced to Gehenna ? This is why I will send you prophets, wise men, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, some of whom you will flog in your**
35 **synagogues and persecute from town to town ; it is that on you may fall the punishment for all the just blood shed on earth from the blood of Abel the just down to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered**
36 **between the sanctuary and the altar. I tell you truly, it will all come upon this generation.**

Luke also attaches his version of this passage to the 'Woes,' and it is clear that it must have been appended to it in the original document used by both. Luke gives the passage as a quotation from a work otherwise unknown, *The Wisdom of God*, and it is possible that its presence is due to the identification of Jesus with *Wisdom*. Certainly some of the features of the passage are unlike Jesus. The theory of the writer is that God desires to punish Jerusalem in his day, and to bring down on her **the punishment for all the just blood shed on earth.** In order to do this, however, God Himself must have some valid excuse, and He obtains this by sending prophets whom, as He well knows, Jerusalem will persecute and kill. This conception of a God who can trap men into sin in order to punish them is utterly foreign to the spirit and teaching of Jesus, but it has parallels in the older Hebrew thought. Thus in 2 Samuel xxiv. 1 Yahweh's anger is kindled against Israel, and in order to have an excuse for giving vent to His anger, He stirs David up to number the people. Still more terrible is the passage in Ezekiel xx. 25–26, where the prophet, after sketching the history of Israel's rebellions, reaches the climax by saying that Yahweh had deliberately given Israel statutes that were not good, particularly the command to sacrifice the first-born, in order that He might have a valid

excuse for destroying the people. It is easy to realize how such a doctrine might be adopted by the writer of an apocryphal book, perhaps in the last century B.C., perhaps even later if he were a Christian.

A further, though less serious, difficulty is presented by the mention of **the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.** It seems to be generally agreed that we have here a mistaken reminiscence of the death of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, recorded in 2 Chronicles xxiv. 22 f. No such person as Zechariah the son of Barachiah is mentioned in the Old Testament, nor is there any record of such an event in later times. But the apocryphal writers were sometimes extraordinarily inaccurate, and it is easy to understand the appearance of such a mistake. The fact that he comes at the end of the line of martyrs suggests also confusion with Zechariah the son of Iddo, whose book stands so near the end of the prophetic canon. In any case the passage serves as a strong contrast to the section which follows.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! slaying the prophets and stoning 37
those who have been sent to you! How often I would fain
have gathered your children as a fowl gathers her brood
under her wings! But you would not have it! See, 38
***your House is left to you, desolate.* For I tell you, you will** 39
never see me again till you say, *Blessed be he who comes*
in the Lord's name.'

This lament occurs also in Luke xiii. 34–35, and the variations between the two are very slight indeed. It is one of the most striking and impressive of the utterances of Jesus. **Slaying the prophets and stoning those who have been sent to** her, she is now about to put to death the greatest of all her visitors, the Messiah himself. The spiritual heroes of the past, her Isaiahs and her Jeremiahs, have tried in their day to save her from disaster, and have failed. Now, in the hour of her greatest peril, when her final punishment is already hanging over her, there has come One who would win her complete salvation, lure her from her superficiality and

dreams of a political kingdom, and make her what she should be, God's great evangelist. But though the danger has threatened, and Jesus has often visited her (incidentally ver. 37 supports the Johannine record of an early Judaean ministry), she has refused to listen. As a **fowl gathers her brood under her wings** when the hawk hovers above, so he has pleaded with her to take refuge in him—in vain ; she **would not have it !**

As our text stands, ver. 28 suggests a reminiscence of Jeremiah xxii. 5. But probably the word **desolate** does not belong to the original text, and has been inserted in order to suggest that passage in Jeremiah. The idea is rather that the city has been deserted—even perhaps divorced—by her God. It was the place which He had chosen, there had He set His name, there had He made His earthly home. Ezekiel had seen Him leave the city before its overthrow by the Chaldeans, and now He was once more to depart. **To you** is probably simply an 'ethic dative,' implying that the expected event will intimately concern the audience. Jesus himself, the Messiah, is being rejected by her, and with his death her last hope will perish. He will come again, it is true, but only on that day of judgment when he returns to reign, greeted by the true messianic cry, **Blessed is he who comes in the Lord's name.** And with these words the way is prepared for the great eschatological discourse of the gospel.

III. Chaps. xxiv.–xxv.: An Eschatological Discourse

Opinions differ very widely as to the extent to which Jesus shared the eschatological views of his contemporaries. There is a school of thought which holds that his whole work was oriented to those views, and that the thought of a triumphant return after his death was always uppermost in his mind. Others insist that the language which gives this impression is either modified by the early church to suit its views, or else is an adoption of the current speech, intended to convey lessons which were far more important than their temporary framework of thought and expression. It is difficult, if not

impossible, to pronounce with certainty as between the two views, but it is clear that for some reason or other the first generation of Christians did expect his speedy return, and if this impression was not based on his own language, whence could it have come?

Eschatological language is found elsewhere through the gospels, but chap. xxiv. is the longest connected passage dealing with the subject, and chap. xxv. contains a pair of parables illustrating the same theme. Chap. xxiv. is, however, composite, containing four distinct elements: (*a*) a discourse found in Mark xiii. (largely reproduced in Luke xxi.); (*b*) a discourse found in Luke xvii. 22–37; (*c*) a discourse found also in Luke xii. 35–46; (*d*) material not found elsewhere. The distribution of these sources in Matthew xxiv. is roughly as follows: to (*a*) belong vers. 1–8, 15–36 (in the main), to (*b*) vers. 25, 26, 37–41, to (*c*) vers. 43–51, and to (*d*) vers. 9–14, 30. Whilst it is clear that this evangelist has understood all these to be apocalyptic, a closer study of the text tends to suggest that the reference of some, at least, of the original utterances was rather to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem.

xxiv.

So Jesus left the temple and went on his way. His disciples 1
came forward to point out to him the temple-buildings, but 2
he replied to them, 'You see all this? I tell you truly, not a stone here will be left upon another, without being torn down.'

These two verses are taken from Mark xiii., where they form the introduction to the great discourse—in itself probably a compilation. Not only the general circumstances, but also such words as **not a stone here will be left upon another, without being torn down,** seem to refer to a physical, even a political, catastrophe, rather than to the calamities of the End.

So as he sat on the Hill of Olives the disciples came up to him 3
in private and said, 'Tell us, when will this happen? What will be the sign of your arrival and of the end of the world?' Jesus replied, 'Take care that no one misleads 4

5 you ; for many will come in my name, saying, " I am the
6 Christ," and they will mislead many. You will hear of
wars and rumours of wars ; see and do not be alarmed.
7 *These have to come,* but it is not the end yet. For *nation*
will rise against nation, and realm against realm ; there
8 will be famines and earthquakes here and there. All that
is but the beginning of the trouble.

Taken almost verbatim from Mark xiii. 3–8. Jesus is first concerned to warn his disciples not to be misled by appearances and by false claims. A similar warning is uttered in Luke xvii. 23, and, indeed, there are certain affinities between that passage and Mark xiii. Some strange and terrible event is to happen, but the disciples are to see and not be alarmed. They are to understand that these things are only preliminaries —all that is but the beginning of the trouble. Wars and natural disasters, together with the appearance of false Messiahs, will but herald the end. At the same time the language of the verses does seem to imply that they will be expecting Jesus himself.

9 Then men will hand you over to suffer affliction, and they will
kill you ; you will be hated by all the Gentiles on account
10 of my name. And *many will be repelled* then, they will
11 betray one another and hate one another. Many false
12 prophets will rise and mislead many. And in most of you
13 love will grow cold by the increase of iniquity ; but he will
14 be saved who holds out to the very end. This gospel of
the Reign shall be preached all over the wide world as a
testimony to all the Gentiles, and then the end will come.

The warning of persecution which Mark inserts at this point has already been used by this evangelist in his account of the mission of the apostles. He substitutes a passage whose content is similar, but whose language suggests that it was taken from a different source altogether. Whilst both Mark xiii. and Matthew x. contain the phrase he will be saved who holds out to the very end, neither suggests that in most of you love will grow cold by reason of iniquity. This must be assigned

to a type of thought we have noticed elsewhere in this gospel, namely, the feeling that in the evangelist's day the church contained a number of unworthy members. Finally, in ver. 14, the idea that the Gospel of the Reign shall be preached all over the wide world is derived from Mark xiii. 10—a verse which Matthew has not used in chap. x.

So when you see *the appalling Horror* spoken of by the pro- 15
phet Daniel, standing erect *in the holy place* (let the reader
note this), then let those who are in Judaea fly to the hills ; 16
a man on the housetop must not go down to fetch what 17
is inside his house, and a man in the field must not turn 18
back to get his coat. Woe to women with child and to 19
women who give suck in those days ! Pray that you 20
may not have to fly in winter or on the sabbath, for there 21
will be *sore misery* then, *such as has never been from the*
beginning of the world till now—no and never shall be.
Had not those days been cut short, not a soul would be 22
saved alive ; however, for the sake of the elect, those
days will be cut short.
If anyone tells you at that time, " Here is the Christ ! " or, 23
" there he is ! " do not believe it ; for false Christs and 24
false prophets will rise and *bring forward great* signs and
wonders, so as to mislead the very elect,—if that were
possible. (I am telling you this beforehand.) 25

If they tell you, " Here he is in the desert," 26
do not go out ;
" here he is in the chamber,"
do not believe it.
For like lightning that shoots from east to west, 27
so will be the arrival of the Son of man.
Wherever the body lies, 28
there will the vultures gather.

Except for vers. 26–28 (cf. Luke xii. 23, 24, 37) the passage is taken almost verbatim from Mark xiii. 14–23. The most noticeable variation is the insertion of the sabbath in ver. 20, where Mark has simply ' the winter.' This is an admirable illustration of the Jewish tendencies of the evangelist ; he has,

perhaps, in mind the saintly Jews who in 168 B.C. had allowed themselves to be massacred rather than defend themselves on the sabbath. It is clear that this passage was originally a prediction of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. The clear insight of Jesus left no room for doubt as to the termination of the course along which the Jewish people were going, and he could see, as clearly as any of the ancient prophets, the doom that threatened the city. First, *the appalling Horror* spoken of by the prophet Daniel shall stand erect *in the holy place*, apparently a reference to the presence of Roman armies round Jerusalem, and so rightly interpreted by Luke. This means that there is not a moment to be lost: if any man will escape he must not go down to fetch what is inside his house; as he steps from the outdoor ladder which led to his roof, he must leap instantly for safety, and take refuge in the mountains. It is said that during the last siege of Jerusalem the Christians actually escaped to Pella, which is not in the hills—indirect testimony to the fact that the passage dates from before A.D. 70. Mention is made of some of the outstanding features of this calamity, and of the fact that the fearful conditions will not last long, at least for the disciples of Jesus.

In all this there is nothing that can be called eschatology. On the contrary, there is no point in telling people let those who are in Judaea fly to the hills in order to escape the Day of Judgment. Clearly the original reference is to the events of A.D. 70. Luke, writing after the event, modifies the language in order to bring this out more clearly. But Matthew also wrote after the fall of Jerusalem, and we ask ourselves why he did not make similar changes. There are two answers to this question: in the first place, Matthew modifies the wording of his source much less than Luke; and in the second place, with a strongly eschatological background to his thinking, this evangelist readily interprets the whole passage in an apocalyptic sense. So he inserts immediately (vers. 26 f.) two or three sentences taken from the same source as Luke xvii. 20 f., a passage which is certainly eschatological. These verses foretell the return of the Son of man,

who will come so suddenly that his arrival will be as a flash of lightning, gleaming out and covering the whole sky. With our experience of British thunderstorms it is difficult for us to realize the sweep and brilliancy of tropical and Oriental lightning, which at every flash illumines the whole scene as brightly as the sunshine, so that for the instant even the further scenery lies open at night before the startled watcher. The mention of **vultures** in ver. 28 apparently has nothing to do with the Roman armies, for it is taken from a strictly eschatological passage. It must mean rather that when the times are ripe the expected calamities will all swoop down together on the rotting carcase, the world whose soul has left it or perished.

Immediately after the misery of those days 29
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not yield her light,
the stars will drop from heaven
and the orbs of the heavens will be shaken.

Then the Sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven; 30
then *all tribes on earth* **will wail, they will see** *the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven* **with great power and glory. He will despatch his angels** *with a loud trumpet-* 31
call to muster **his elect** *from the four winds, from the verge of heaven to the verge of earth.*

Except for the first part of ver. 30, these verses are derived from Mark xiii. 24–27. Though even in Mark the passage is distinctly apocalyptic, Matthew heightens the impression by introducing the mention of **the Sign of the Son of man,** and by adding *a loud trumpet-call* (from Isaiah xxvii. 13) to ver. 30. The passage contains the usual accompaniments of the great Day in apocalyptic thought, the violent inversion and destruction of the material universe, a falling heaven and a crumbling earth. The unique expression is that which this evangelist has added, **Then the Sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven.** The meaning of this phrase is far from clear. It may be a reference to the ' standard ' mentioned in

Isaiah xi. 12, though this is hardly apocalyptic. Many commentators have taken it to mean the appearance of a Cross in the heavens, the proper **Sign of the Son of man**. It seems as if it might be a battle-standard raised by the Christ in calling his forces to conflict and victory, and it is possible that we have to see in it a reference to some eschatological thought and phrase which has not survived in any of our extant apocalyptic books.

32 **Let the fig tree teach you a parable. As soon as its branches**
turn soft and put out leaves, you know summer is at hand ;
33 **so, whenever you see all this happen, you may be sure He**
is at hand, at the very door.
34 **I tell you truly, the present generation will not pass away**
35 **till all this happens. Heaven and earth will pass away,**
but my words will never pass away.

The lesson of the last sections is reinforced by the **parable of the fig tree**. Just as men can judge from the ordinary events of nature what will happen in the near future, so the disciples of Jesus should be able to foresee the coming disaster when the first signs of it appear. Further, he insists that his words are infallible, and that they are more certain than the material universe itself. The whole passage is taken almost verbatim from Mark xiii. 28–31, and it is interesting to note that this evangelist has allowed the words **the present generation will not pass away till all this happens** to stand. This may be a simple oversight, or there may still have been living persons who remembered the actual life of Jesus ; or, again, the evangelist may have interpreted the words as applying to his own generation. The first seems, on the whole, the most probable explanation.

36 **Now no one knows anything about that day or hour, not**
37 **even the angels in heaven, but only my Father. As were**
the days of Noah, so will the arrival of the Son of man be.
38 **For as in the days before the deluge people ate and drank,**
married and were married, till the day *Noah entered the*
39 *ark* ; **and as they knew nothing till the deluge came**

and swept them all away; so will the arrival of the Son of man be.

Then there will be two men in the field, 40
one will be taken and one will be left;
two women will be grinding at the millstone, 41
one will be taken and one will be left.

Keep on the watch then, for you never know what day 42
your Lord will come. But be sure of this, that if the 43
householder had known at what watch in the night the
thief was coming, he would have been on the watch, he
would not have allowed his house to be broken into. So 44
be ready yourselves, for the Son of man is coming at an
hour you do not expect.

This passage, which emphasizes the demand for wakefulness on the ground that the coming of the Son of man will be entirely unexpected, is composite. Ver. 36 is taken (with one significant omission) from Mark xiii. 32, and ver. 42 looks like a summary of the rest of the Marcan passage. Between the two Matthew has inserted vers. 37–41, which appear in a shorter form in Luke xvii. 26, 27, 35. Vers. 43, 44 are found, with verbal modifications, in Luke xii. 39, 40.

God has His own times, and these are known only to Himself —**you never know what day your Lord will come.** This is the key to the section, and the evangelist has reinforced it by reference to the calamity which overtook the ancient world in the days of Noah. It is significant that in the original passage in Mark Jesus adds that even the Son does not know when the hour for his own appearance will strike. Matthew, with his more advanced Christology, avoids the suggestion that there can be any limitation on the knowledge of Jesus by omitting these words.[1]

Not only is the coming of the Christ unexpected; it is discriminating. As the arrangement of the text suggests, there is a certain rhythm in vers. 40, 41, which may imply

[1] It should be noted that some of the most ancient authorities include these words, but it seems likely that they were introduced from Mark in the course of textual transmission.

that they came originally from another source than the rest of the passage. As they stand, they are obscure, and probably refer to some detailed eschatological theory, such as that which was familiar in the teaching of Paul. The treatment accorded to men will be unequal—so much is clear ; but the grounds of the difference, and even its nature, are left unexplained. We must assume that these things would be familiar to the readers of the gospel, who may have held a belief that the faithful would first be caught away, leaving the unbelievers still on earth to endure further calamity at the hands of divine and messianic vengeance. But this, after all, is a matter of conjecture.

The conclusion of this teaching is the lesson, Keep awake. In Mark (xiii. 34) the command to watch, i.e. not to go to sleep, is given especially to the gate-keeper by a master who is going on a long journey. The evangelist has preferred the form that the saying takes in another source, and has made the injunction more general. Of course the metaphor of the thief must not be pressed too closely ; the point of the comparison lies in the unexpectedness of his visit.

45 **Now where is the trusty and thoughtful servant, whom his lord and master has set over his household to assign them**
46 **their supplies at the proper time ? Blessed is that servant if his lord and master finds him so doing when he arrives !**
47 **I tell you truly, he will set him over all his property.**
48 **But if the bad servant says to himself, " My lord and**
49 **master is long of coming," and if he starts to beat his fellow-servants and to eat and drink with drunkards,**
50 **that servant's lord and master will arrive on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not**
51 **know ; he will cut him in two and assign him the fate of the impious. There men will wail and gnash their teeth.**

With slight verbal alterations this passage is found also in Luke xii. 42–46, where it follows directly on the verses with which the last section concludes. As reinforcing the lesson of the whole latter part of the chapter, the purpose and meaning

of the verses are beyond mistake. It will be noticed that the lesson is most practical. The servant is not required to abstract himself from all business, and stand day and night looking out over the road. **His lord and master has set** him **over his household to assign them their supplies at the proper time.** What the master desires is that he may find **him so doing when he arrives.** In other words, the proper preparation for the coming of Christ is the faithful accomplishment of the regular duties which are laid upon the disciple. Failing this, when his master does come, he will **assign him the fate of the hypocrites.** The passage closes with a phrase which is a favourite with this evangelist, who uses it seven times. The only other passage where it occurs is Luke xiii. 28, paralleled by Matthew viii. 12.

A study of the whole chapter makes it clear that whilst the greater part of one of the sources, Mark xiii., may refer to the fall of Jerusalem, and only the final verses of that chapter are necessarily eschatological—they may have been a later addition—the other two main sources, those found also in Luke xii. and xvii., must be regarded as apocalyptic. We are thus practically compelled to admit that, whilst this element may not have been so prominent in the teaching of Jesus as is sometimes supposed, it cannot have been entirely absent. He did give his disciples reason to think that after his death he would return in miraculous fashion, accompanied by celestial powers and heralded by catastrophic events, to end the old age and inaugurate the new. Further, it is clear that the disciples had reason to expect that this return would not be long delayed, and that the story of the universe would be consummated within the lifetime of some of themselves. It is only too obvious that this expectation, in all its completeness, has not been fulfilled, and many disciples to-day gravely doubt whether it ever will be fulfilled in a literal sense. Those who hold that opinion are compelled to believe that Jesus was necessarily limited in his choice of expressions by the thought-background of his contemporaries. The literal truth would have been more misleading to them than the language he actually used, and he was compelled to clothe his lessons in

the thought-forms which would best bring home to his immediate hearers the essential truth he sought to convey. This was an intense demand for fidelity in life and purpose. This demand is no less stringent on other ages than it was on the first Christian generation. Even though men may not expect to see the Christ descending through the riven sky, the truth remains that he is ever at hand, and in his own way, adapted to each generation and to each individual, he comes. And when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth?

XXV.

1 Then shall the Realm of heaven be compared to ten maidens
who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom
2 and the bride. Five of them were stupid and five were
3 sensible. For although the stupid took their lamps, they
4 took no oil with them, whereas the sensible took oil in
5 their vessels as well as their lamps. As the bridegroom
was long of coming, they all grew drowsy and went to
6 sleep. But at midnight the cry arose, "Here is the bride-
7 groom! Come out to meet him!" Then all the maidens
8 rose and trimmed their lamps. The stupid said to the
sensible, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going
9 out." But the sensible replied, "No, there may not be
enough for us and for you. Better go to the dealers and
10 buy for yourselves." Now while they were away buying
oil, the bridegroom arrived; those maidens who were
ready accompanied him to the marriage-banquet, and the
11 door was shut. Afterwards the rest of the maidens came
12 and said, "Oh, sir, oh sir, open the door for us!" but he
13 replied, "I tell you frankly, I do not know you." Keep
on the watch then, for you know neither the day nor the
hour.

The lessons of the previous chapter are driven home by three parables, of which this is the first. It is found only in this gospel, though there is a short simile in Luke xiii. 25–27 which seems to convey the same general ideas, whilst lamps and a marriage are mentioned in the eschatological passage in Luke xii. 35–36. It has been suggested that vers. 11–13

are a later addition, due to a reminiscence of Luke xiii. 25–27.

The lesson enforced in this parable is not that of wakefulness, for **they all grew drowsy and went to sleep.** It is rather that of forethought, for although the stupid took their lamps, they **took no oil with them,** whereas the sensible took oil in their **vessels as well as their lamps.** They know that the bridegroom will return to his home, bringing with him the bride from her father's house, and they do not know how long he will be. Therefore it is only prudent to see that there are supplies of oil at hand, which shall enable them to take their place in the festal procession. So the conduct of the disciples must be such as to prepare them for any event ; it is not enough to have a supply of spiritual life which will be exhausted in a short time.

For the case is that of a man going abroad, who summoned his 14
servants and handed over his property to them ; to one he 15
gave twelve hundred pounds, to another five hundred, and to another two hundred and fifty ; each got according to his capacity. Then the man went abroad. The servant 16
who had got the twelve hundred pounds went at once and traded with them, making another twelve hundred. Similarly the servant who had got the five hundred pounds 17
made another five hundred. But the servant who had got 18
the two hundred and fifty pounds went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. Now a long 19
time afterwards the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. Then the servant who 20
had got the twelve hundred pounds came forward, bringing twelve hundred more ; he said, "You handed me twelve hundred pounds, sir ; here I have gained another twelve hundred." His master said to him, "Capital, you excellent 21
and trusty servant ! You have been trusty in charge of a small sum : I will put you in charge of a large sum. Come and share your master's feast." Then the servant with the 22
five hundred pounds came forward. He said, "You handed me five hundred pounds, sir ; here I have gained another five hundred." His master said to him, "Capital, you 23

excellent and trusty servant! You have been trusty in
charge of a small sum: I will put you in charge of a large
24 sum. Come and share your master's feast." Then the
servant who had got the two hundred and fifty pounds came
forward. He said, "I knew you were a hard man, sir,
reaping where you never sowed and gathering where you
25 never winnowed. So I was afraid; I went and hid your
two hundred and fifty pounds in the earth. There's your
26 money!" His master said to him in reply, "You rascal,
you idle servant! You knew, did you, that I reap where
I have never sowed and gathered where I have never
27 winnowed! Well then, you should have handed my
money to the bankers and I would have got my capital with
28 interest when I came back. Take therefore the two hundred
and fifty pounds away from him, give it to the servant who
had the twelve hundred.

29 For to everyone who has shall more be given and richly
given;
but from him who has nothing, even what he has shall
be taken.

30 Throw the good-for-nothing servant into darkness outside;
there men will wail and gnash their teeth.

This parable finds a parallel in Luke xix. 11–27, though the differences are so great as to forbid the suggestion that both are copied from exactly the same source. In Luke the sums entrusted to the servant are much smaller, and, more significant, the same amount is given to each. The master has gone abroad—as Herod Antipas did—to try to secure a royal title for himself, and has been followed by the hatred of his people. There is thus a stronger motive for the servants to betray his interests; they are on the unpopular side. At the end the faithless servant is punished only by losing his money; it is the rebellious subjects on whom the heavier punishment falls. Parallels are also found in rabbinic writings.

The lesson of the parable is very familiar. All the opportunities, of every kind, which men possess are sacred trusts confided to them by God. The size or apparent importance

of them does not matter ; a man can do no more than make the best use of what is supplied to him. Here is another difference between this and the Lucan parable : here the first and second servants are equally to be commended, for each has doubled his trust, whilst in Luke the first servant does twice as well as the second. It is not enough merely to keep God's gifts intact ; he who fails to make any use at all of his trust is most severely condemned, for he has failed even to allow the natural development of what has been committed to him. The most difficult sentence in the parable is ver. 28, for it does not seem to be clear why the first servant should have the money entrusted to the last. It can hardly be intended as a gift, for the reward has already been bestowed on the faithful servant. The thought seems to be—to repeat a metaphor used by Johannes Weiss—that the gifts of God are not given like money, but like plants, which need a suitable soil for their growth. Compared with the sums with which he has dealt, and still more with the large sum which is now to be placed in his charge, the first servant will find this new addition to his responsibilities very small. Nevertheless the principle is universal, and must be applied to small things as well as to large matters.

When the Son of man comes in his glory and *all the angels with* 31
***him*, then he will sit on the throne of his glory, and all 32**
nations will be gathered in front of him ; he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, setting the sheep on his right hand and the 33
goats on his left. Then shall the King say to those on his 34
right, " Come you whom my Father has blessed, come into your inheritance in the realm prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was hungry and you fed me, 35
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a stranger and you entertained me,
I was unclothed and you clothed me, 36
I was ill and you looked after me,
I was in prison and you visited me."

37 Then the just will answer,

"Lord, when did we see you hungry and fed you? or
thirsty and gave you drink?
38 when did we see you a stranger and entertain you?
or unclothed and clothed you?
39 when did we see you ill or in prison and visit you?"

40 The King will answer them, "I tell you truly, in so far as
you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even to the
41 least of them, you did it to me." Then he will say to those
on the left, "Begone from me, you accursed ones, to the
eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his
angels!

42 For I was hungry but you never fed me,
I was thirsty but you never gave me drink,
43 I was a stranger but you never entertained me,
I was unclothed but you never clothed me,
I was ill and in prison but you never looked after me."
44 Then they will answer too, "Lord, when did we ever see
you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or unclothed or ill or
45 in prison, and did not minister to you?" Then he will
answer them, "I tell you truly, in so far as you did not do
it to one of these, even the least of them, you did not do
it to me.'

46 So they shall depart to eternal punishment,
and the just to eternal life."

This parable has no parallel elsewhere in the gospels, though the language and the whole presentation have numerous connexions in Jewish writings, both apocalyptic and rabbinic. In fact it has the appearance of being a Jewish story which has been adapted for Christian purposes. Its general form and meaning are too familiar to need comment, for they are self-explanatory. Here or hereafter the judgment of God is passed on every man; He is never confused as to the moral or spiritual value of a man's life and actions. Men stand approved or condemned by what they have done, and at first sight this seems to justify a doctrine of 'justification by

works' which elsewhere is seen to be so discordant with the teaching of Jesus. Closer inspection, however, shews that this would be a false deduction from the text. It is true that men are judged in accordance with their acts, but that is because the acts are simply the natural outcome of the character. To the one class the King says, **'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, come into your inheritance in the realm prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you fed me,'** etc. To the others the sentence is the exact opposite: **'I was hungry but you never fed me.'** Both classes are surprised to hear the judgment, and the explanation is: **'I tell you truly, in so far as you did it** (or **did not do it**) **to one of these . . . even to the least of them, you did it** (or **did not do it**) **to me.'** Jesus suggests that there is a mystical connexion between his **brothers** and himself; he is in them, and they represent him in the world, are his outward expression, his body.

The further point of the whole parable is that neither class thought they were doing anything particularly right or wrong. They had just done the thing natural to them, without hope of reward or fear of punishment, and their acts had value, not in themselves, but because they were illustrations of character. We have once more the familiar lesson of Jesus: **'You will know them by their fruits; do men gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? No, every good tree bears sound fruit, but a rotten tree bears bad fruit; a good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot bear sound fruit. So you will know them by their fruit'** (vii. 16–20). And with this lesson Matthew's story of the life of Jesus ends, and the evangelist passes to the narrative of his death.

E. CHAPS. XXVI.–XXVIII.: THE END—AND THE BEGINNING

In this closing section of the gospel, Matthew follows Mark very closely. In most of the sections there is a large measure of verbal identity between the two, and the chief differences are due to small insertions in the text by this evangelist. It

is worth observing that none of these insertions is found in Luke, whose narrative has several notable divergences from that of Mark, and appears to include material from an entirely different account of the crucifixion.

It has been supposed, from the fullness with which this subject is treate in Mark, that there was once an independent account, and that it was one of the first portions of the story to be reduced to writing. The whole certainly forms the climax of the gospel story, and assumes a place quite disproportionate to a mere biography. From the first the church felt that the life of Jesus was best regarded as the prelude to his death and resurrection, and that it was in these last events that the explanation of the whole is to be found. In this respect Jesus is unique among the world's greatest religious leaders. None cares how Confucius died. The passing of Siddharta was told with loving affection by early Buddhists, but it was the death of a dear master whose work was done. Muhammad's last hours are of importance mainly because they raised the question of his successor. Socrates, like Jesus, was executed as a criminal, but it never occurred to any of his disciples, much as they loved him, that his death was anything more than a tragic manifestation of prejudice and injustice. It is inconceivable that any of the Greek philosophic schools, which looked back on Socrates as their great hero and martyr, should have adopted the hemlock-cup as their device and symbol. But to the Christian Jesus is meaningless without the Cross, and it is not an accident that this has become the universal sign of the Christian faith. With Jesus we feel that his death was not merely the end of his life-work; it was not even simply its consummation. To die as he died *was* his life's work.

The section falls into the following divisions. After a short introduction (xxvi. 1–5), the evangelist describes the anointing at Bethany (xxvi. 6–13) and the arrangement with Judas (xxvi. 14–16). Then follow the Last Supper (xxvi. 17–29), the final announcement of the Passion (xxvi. 30–35), and the agony in the garden (xxvi. 36–46). The next stage includes the arrest (xxvi. 47–56), the trial before Caiaphas (xxvi.

57–68), Peter's denial (xxvi. 69–75), and the trial before Pilate (xxvii. 1–2, 11–26). The mockery of the soldiers (xxvii. 27–30) precedes the actual crucifixion (xxvii. 31–56), which is followed by the burial (xxvii. 57–61). Additions to Mark's narrative are found in the death of Judas (xxvii. 3–10) and the watch set on the tomb (xxvii. 62–66). The story of the Resurrection begins with the visit of the women to the tomb (xxviii. 1–10), followed by the explanation of the disappearance of the body current in Jewish circles (xxviii. 11–15), and concluding with the appearance of Jesus in Galilee and the great commission (xxviii. 16–20).

I. xxvi. 1–16 : Preliminary

xxvi.

When Jesus finished saying all this he said to his disciples, 1
'You know the passover is to be held two days after this ; 2
and the Son of man will be delivered up to be crucified.'
Then the high priests and the elders of the people met in the 3
palace of the high priest who was called Caiaphas and took 4
counsel together to get hold of Jesus by craft and have him
put to death. 'Only,' they said, 'it must not be during 5
the festival, in case of a riot among the people.'

This short introduction gives the attitude of the two sides towards the coming event. To Jesus the Passover is the time of his suffering—**the Son of man will be delivered up to be crucified.** To the Sadducean priests it is an opportunity, which must, however, be carefully used. They have failed in their efforts both to entrap him into treason and to discredit him with the crowd ; their only resource is **to get hold of Jesus by craft and have him put to death.** The mention of the **festival** introduces an important point, that of the chronology. We do not, as a matter of fact, know the date of the crucifixion. Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, makes the Last Supper the Passover meal, and Jesus is put to death on the 14th of Nisan. But the Fourth Gospel (and, apparently, also St. Paul) places the final meal on the previous evening, so that Jesus dies during the time when the Passover victims are

actually being killed in the Temple. There are faint suggestions of this view in Luke, and Mark's phrase (repeated here), **it must not be during the festival, in case of a riot,** looks as if he were aware of the tradition. The arrest must be made before the slaughter of the paschal victims roused the excitement and fanaticism of the crowd.

6 **Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the**
7 **leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of expensive perfume which she poured over his head as he**
8 **lay at table. When the disciples saw this they were angry.**
9 **'What is the use of this waste?' they said; 'the perfume might have been sold for a good sum, and the poor**
10 **might have got that.' But Jesus was aware of what they said, and he replied, 'Why are you annoying the woman?**
11 **It is a beautiful thing she has done to me. The poor you always have beside you, but you will not always have me.**
12 **In pouring this perfume on my body she has acted in**
13 **view of my burial. I tell you truly, wherever this gospel is preached through all the world, men will speak of what she has done in memory of her.'**

A very familiar story, taken almost verbatim from Mark. This evangelist, however, does not give the exact value of the ointment as his source does, but merely speaks of **a good sum.** The incident has been compared with the similar narrative in Luke vii. 36 f., though the differences are striking, in addition to the fact that one event is placed at the end of the ministry and the other at the beginning. Nevertheless, Luke does sometimes make so free with the order of his sources that it is possible that the two narratives have a common origin, though clearly Luke preferred some other account to that of Mark. The incident illustrates the strain which the near prospect of the Passion had laid on Jesus. So terrible is the thing before him, that an act of affection by an insignificant, nameless woman is **a beautiful thing.** Every thought, too, is oriented to his death, and so she has acted **in view of my burial.**

14 **Then one of the twelve called Judas Iscariot went and said to**
15 **the high priests, 'What will you give me for betraying**

him to you?' And *they weighed out* for him *thirty silver pieces*. From that moment he sought a good opportunity 16
to betray him.

Again taken from Mark, with the addition of the price paid. The thirty silver pieces appear to be a reminiscence of Zechariah xi. 12 and Exodus xxi. 32, where the sum is stated to be the price of a slave. Evidently the prophetic passage is here interpreted in a messianic sense, though the familiar words 'that it might be fulfilled' are wanting. The action of Judas has been variously explained. To many modern minds it seems that he must have been above the average level of intelligence among the disciples, and that, with a genuine zeal for his Master, he found him too slow to seize the opportunity offered to him, and therefore secured his betrayal in order to force his hand and compel him to declare himself in some miraculous way. The repentance of Judas is in support of this view. On the other hand, to his contemporaries, including this evangelist, and still more the writer of the Fourth Gospel, Judas' action seemed to be simply a piece of cowardly and sordid treachery. It is perhaps a matter on which only one who felt himself to be wholly guiltless would dare to pronounce to-day.

II. xxvi. 17–46: The Last Night

On the first day of unleavened bread the disciples of Jesus 17
came up and said to him, 'Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the passover?' He said, 'Go into the 18
city to so-and-so; tell him that the Teacher says, "My time is near, I will celebrate the passover at your house with my disciples."' So the disciples did as Jesus had 19
told them, and prepared the passover. When evening came 20
he lay at table with the disciples, and as they were eating 21
he said, 'One of you is going to betray me.' They were 22
greatly distressed at this, and each of them said to him, 'Lord, surely it is not me.' He answered, 'One who 23
has dipped his hand into the same dish as myself is going

24 to betray me. The Son of man goes the road that the
scripture has described for him, but woe to the man by
whom the Son of man is betrayed! Better that man
25 had never been born!' Then Judas his betrayer said,
'Surely it is not me, rabbi?' He said to him, 'Is it
not?'
26 As they were eating he took a loaf and after the blessing he
broke it; then he gave it to the disciples saying, 'Take
27 and eat this, it means my body.' He also took a cup and
after thanking God he gave it to them saying, 'Drink of
28 it, all of you; this means my blood, the new *covenant-*
blood, shed for many, to win the remission of their sins.
29 I tell you, after this I will never drink this produce of the
vine till the day I drink it new with you in the Realm of
my Father.'

Here again the evangelist closely follows Mark. He has, however, omitted the graphic detail of the man bearing a pitcher of water, and has added the identification of Judas as the traitor.

The language of ver. 18—'I will celebrate the passover at your house with my disciples'—makes it perfectly clear that the meal was actually the Passover. Yet it is a little strange to find the whole process of offering the sacrifice covered by the simple phrase the disciples did as Jesus had told them, and prepared the passover. The evidence of other early sources has already been mentioned, and Canon Box and others have pointed out that the meal rather resembles the so-called 'Qiddush,' or evening meal eaten on the evening which began the Sabbath or other sacred occasion. Still, the dominant thought in the mind of Jesus is the death which awaits him, but now that his disciples alone are with him, it is that fact of the treachery—which he well knows—that rises to the surface. 'One of you is going to betray me' . . . 'One who has dipped his hand in the same dish' (another way of saying 'one who has shared this meal,' since all took from the same dish) 'as myself is going to betray me.'

Whether this evangelist and the writer of the Fourth Gospel

are right in stating that Jesus indicated the traitor either to himself or to his fellow-disciple, there can be no doubt that he knew who it was. His amazingly clear insight into character made it possible for him to see how every situation would stimulate each man to a certain reaction. Peter would not have betrayed him, but he was made of the stuff that disowns its best friends under sudden pressure. Judas, whatever his motives were—and we may be sure that Jesus at least read them correctly—was the kind of person who could and would betray. There are such people in the world, and they are responsible for what they have made of themselves. For the fulfilment of his plans for his own death Jesus needed a traitor, and here was one ready to his hand. Jesus, in complete harmony with his general principles, does not condemn Judas for this act alone. It is because the act is the natural outcome of his whole nature that the man falls under sentence ; it is what Judas is, not what he does, that dooms him. That is why Jesus can say, '**Better** [for] **that man had** [he] **never been born**' (so more nearly the Greek). It is impossible not to feel that Jesus speaks with a certain deep sympathy ; in spite of his character and his deed, Jesus loved Judas, and saw the betrayal from the point of view from which Judas would see it when he knew all.

There are two forms of the narrative of the significant feature of this meal, one in 1 Corinthians xi. 23–25, apparently followed to some extent by Luke, and the Marcan account repeated here. Both make it perfectly clear that at this moment, with the foreknowledge of death overwhelming him, Jesus felt the need of doing and saying something which would stamp the facts on the minds of his disciples. When he said, '**Drink it, all of you ; this is my blood,**' he used language which made it impossible for any of his hearers to forget the reason he advanced for his death. He meant to die, and he meant to die in the way he did ; nothing is clearer from the gospel story than this. And when he used the term *covenant-blood* he deliberately carried back the thought of his disciples to the early days when Israel and her God had first come into communion with one another. For the

relation between the two was not a 'natural one,' like that which existed between other tribes and their gods. It was an act of deliberate choice on the part of the God and of deliberate acceptance on the part of the people. It thus needed to be ratified by a covenant ceremony, that described in Exodus xxiv. 4–8. There the picture is that of the two parties, standing over against one another, the people on the one hand and an altar, representing the God, on the other. Victims are slain—this is not strictly a 'sacrifice,' because the offering is not made to anyone—and their blood drained into bowls. Half the contents of these is flung over the altar, and half over the heads of the people.

The symbolism is clear. The blood is the life, taken from the victims for the use of the two parties to the agreement. It has overshadowed and enveloped both; they are no longer two separate entities, they are a real unity, parts of one another, and inseparable as long as the terms of the agreement are kept. Israel delighted to think of her God as one who kept covenants, but the best spirits in her midst had to confess only too often that she had broken the conditions she had accepted. The ritual often mentions an act by which an offender could be restored to the covenant relationship; it included the touching of the altar with the blood of a slaughtered victim. At length the state of Israel grew so terribly corrupt that even this could not restore her, and Jeremiah saw that for the covenant to maintain its hold it must be placed in men's inward parts and written on their hearts. Yet even the greatest of the prophets failed to realize that a victim could be found in whose shed blood, in whose given life, God and man could be finally and indissolubly one. It was left for Jesus to recognize that he himself was the one victim in whom these two parties, sundered by human sin, could be permanently united. There may be other explanations of the Atonement, but no one who has entered into the spirit of the Old Testament can fail to see that Jesus died primarily because he believed that in no other way could humanity achieve its supreme ideal. Let the theologians make what they can of the death of Jesus; the fact remains

beyond doubt or dispute that Jesus died **for many** (whether he actually used the following words or not—Mark omits them) **to win the remission of their sins.**

At the same time, horrible though the immediate prospect was, it was not the end. Like the suffering Servant, his truest prototype under the old covenant, Jesus could 'look away from the agony of his soul, and be satisfied by his knowledge,' and speak of '**the day I drink it new with you in the Realm of my Father.**' So in this solemn moment, in the midst of that common meal which is to all Orientals the closest possible bond of union, he linked his disciples with himself in the thought of his agony, his achievement, and his triumph.

After the hymn of praise they went out to the Hill of Olives. 30
Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all be disconcerted 31
over me to-night, for it is written, *I will strike at the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.* **But** 32
after my rising I will precede you to Galilee.' Peter 33
answered, 'Supposing they are all disconcerted over you,
I will not be disconcerted.' Jesus said to him, 'I tell 34
you truly, you will disown me three times this very night,
before the cock crows.' Peter said to him, 'Even 35
though I have to die with you, I will never disown you.'
And all the disciples said the same thing.

Again Mark is followed practically verbatim. This is the last prediction of the Passion of Jesus, and it brings out one more detail. All through his life Jesus had valued human companionship, and to these twelve he had given himself with an absorbing love. Yet, that his death might touch the lowest possible depths of sorrow, he must die in loneliness. Those who had been his dearest friends on earth were to forsake him. He tells them, '**You will all be disconcerted in me to-night,**' without reproach or condemnation, and reinforces his statement by appeal to a familiar messianic passage, Zechariah xiii. 7.

To the disciples themselves this thing seemed incredible, and Peter is only expressing the feelings of all when he says,

'Supposing they are all disconcerted'—literally 'tripped up'—**'over you, I will not be disconcerted.'** But, as the foremost in speech, he is also to be the foremost in failure. Doubtless all those who so solemnly and honestly asserted their fidelity would have denied Jesus if the occasion had arisen. Within the next few hours they would all be ready to say that they had never known him.

36 **Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he told the disciples, 'Sit here till I go over there and**
37 **pray.' But he took Peter and the two sons of Zebedaeus along with him; and when he began to feel distressed**
38 **and agitated, he said to them, '*My heart is sad,* sad even**
39 **to death; stay here and watch with me.' Then he went forward a little and fell on his face praying, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me. Yet, not what I**
40 **will but what thou wilt.' Then he went to the disciples and found them asleep; and he said to Peter, 'So the three of you could not watch with me for a single hour?**
41 **Watch and pray, all of you, so that you may not slip into temptation. The spirit is eager but the flesh is weak.'**
42 **Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cup cannot pass unless I drink it,**
43 **thy will be done.' And when he returned he found them**
44 **asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went back for the third time, praying in the same**
45 **words as before. Then he went to the disciples and said to them, 'Still asleep? still resting? The hour is near, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.**
46 **Come, get up and let us go. Here is my betrayer close at hand!'**

Once more Mark is followed almost verbatim; there are slight verbal alterations and the words of the prayer are repeated in Matthew in ver. 42.

This scene needs no comment or explanation. It is for Jesus the last parting of the ways. Escape is still possible, but it will be possible only for a few moments longer. And so we have the full force of the prospect of the Cross concen-

trated into these moments in an agony which is heightened by the unsatisfied passion for human companionship and sympathy. Jesus leaned on his disciples—his friends—and they failed him. Yet he only made excuses for them—'**The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.**' And he had still one resource ; his sense of God remained. Only one who had all his life found God the most real of all the facts of experience could, in the face of the overwhelming wave of spiritual anguish, have said, '**My Father . . . not what I will but what thou wilt.**'

Grammatically the words rendered '**Still asleep? Still resting?**' may be either indicative or imperative. The former parsing, giving the question as in the text above, is supported by the first words of ver. 46, '**Come, get up.**' The more familiar rendering of the imperative implies that the struggle is over ; he has no longer any need of their companionship and support in the battle, for the victory is won, and it is too late for the strife to be renewed, for '**Here is my betrayer close at hand.**'

III. xxvi. 47—xxvii. 31 : Arrest and Trial

While he was still speaking, up came Judas, one of the twelve, 47
accompanied by a large mob with swords and cudgels who
had come from the high priests and the elders of the
people. Now his betrayer had given them a signal ; 48
he said, 'Whoever I kiss, that is the man ; seize him.'
So he went up at once to Jesus ; 'Hail, rabbi!' he said, 49
and kissed him. Jesus said, 'My man, do your errand.' 50
Then they laid hands on Jesus and seized him. One of 51
his companions put out his hand, drew his sword, and
struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.
Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its 52
place ; all who draw the sword shall die by the sword.
What! do you think I cannot appeal to my Father to 53
furnish me at this moment with over twelve legions of
angels? Only, how could the scripture be fulfilled then 54
—the scriptures that say this must be so?' At that 55

hour Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you sallied out to arrest me like a robber, with swords and cudgels? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you never
56 seized me. However, this has all happened for the fulfilment of the prophetic scriptures!'

The narrative of Mark has here been expanded by the introduction of two remarks attributed to Jesus. The first is his direct address to the traitor in ver. 50, the second consists of vers. 52–54.

These verses contain the story that is so familar, the betrayal of Jesus with a respectful kiss, the futile attempt of one of his disciples to make good the boasts of the early evening, the protest of Jesus against the method and occasion of his arrest. Disciples and enemies alike took him for one of those popular revolutionaries who sought to establish a messianic kingdom by force. One of the former (named in the Fourth Gospel as Peter—a likely identification) **put out his hand, drew his sword, and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear,** an illustration alike of the misunderstanding as to the nature of Jesus' work and of the futility of the disciples at violence. This evangelist alone of the Synoptists records the rebuke administered by Jesus, **'Put your sword back into its place; all who draw the sword shall die by the sword.'** A kingdom founded on force is always liable to be overthrown by superior force; that which is to endure must have a firmer foundation and a surer basis. The next remark, referring to the **twelve legions of angels,** may be a reflexion back from the views of the early church. They had no doubt that Jesus had at his disposal all the celestial forces of God, and could have used them for the overthrow of his enemies. But **the scriptures must be fulfilled;** God had spoken, and His word must stand.

The enemies had made precisely the same mistake. They had seen Jesus do a vigorous deed in the cleansing of the temple, and they could not guess that he would have allowed himself to be arrested while he **sat in the temple teaching.** Yet even there he would have made no resistance, nor have

allowed resistance to be made by others on his behalf. The same principle would have held good there also.

Then all the disciples left him and fled ; but those who had 57
seized Jesus took him away to the house of Caiaphas
the high priest, where the scribes and elders had gathered.
Peter followed him at a distance as far as the courtyard 58
of the high priest, and when he got inside he sat down
beside the attendants to see the end.
Now the high priests and the whole of the Sanhedrin tried to 59
secure false evidence against Jesus, in order to have him
put to death ; but they could find none, although a 60
number of false witnesses came forward. However, two
men came forward at last and said, 'This fellow declared, 61
"I can destroy the temple of God and build it in three
days."' So the high priest rose and said to him, 'Have you 62
no reply to make ? What of this evidence against you ? '
Jesus said nothing. Then the high priest addressed him, 63
'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the
Christ, the Son of God ! ' Jesus said to him, 'Even 64
so ! But I tell you, in future you will all see *the Son
of man seated at the right hand* of the Power, and *coming
on the clouds of heaven.*' Then the high priest tore his 65
dress and cried, 'He has blasphemed ! What more
evidence do we want ? Look, you have heard his blas-
phemy for yourselves ! What is your view ? ' They 66
replied, 'He is doomed to death.' Then they spat in 67
his face and buffeted him, some of them cuffing him and
crying, 'Prophesy to us, you Christ ! tell us who struck 68
you ! '

The variations from Mark are slight, yet have a considerable bearing on the meaning of one or two verses. If we had Matthew alone before us, we should judge that the two witnesses who testified to the blasphemy against the temple agreed with one another, and the High Priest's attempt to entrap Jesus was unnecessary to secure his condemnation. A reference to Mark, however, shows that even on this point there was not sufficient harmony to justify a conviction,

and that the question of the High Priest (who is not named in Mark) was due to the failure of the witnesses. The actual words themselves on which the charge of the witnesses was based differ in the two accounts. The Fourth Gospel (ii. 19) records a similar expression: 'Destroy this sanctuary and I will raise it up in three days,' and adds 'He meant the sanctuary of his body.' The Marcan record is that the words ran, 'I will destroy this temple made by hands, and in three days I will build another temple not made by hands.' We may regard this as the earliest form, and it finds, as a matter of fact, its closest parallel in 2 Corinthians v. 1: 'I know that if this earthly tent of mine is taken down, I get a home from God, made by no human hands, eternal in the heavens.' (The similarity to the text of Mark is much closer in the Greek than in the English.) We may suspect, from the way in which Paul introduces the phrase, that he is consciously quoting, and it is not difficult to conjecture that the sentence was included amongst the sayings of Jesus which he knew.

Whatever the original form of the words may have been, there is thus reason to believe that Jesus had used language which might be interpreted in the general sense given in these reports of his trial. Further, it is clear that the evidence thus gained was unsatisfactory, and the High Priest endeavoured to make the Prisoner convict himself—'I adjure you' (this word is not in Mark) 'by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God!' The last phrase is not unknown to pre-Christian apocalyptic literature, for the Messiah is a divine being in the Similitudes of Enoch—not, apparently, in any other writing of the type. Jesus replies in language which recalls rather than cites two passages commonly regarded as messianic, Psalm cx. 1, and Daniel vii. 13. This is at once interpreted by the High Priest as blasphemy. It is by no means clear where the crime lay. The passages were recognized as messianic, and though the term was sometimes held to include a wide range of sins, yet nowhere does it appear that there was any justification for regarding a claim to Messiahship as one of them. Possibly the High Priest, as a Sadducee, was hostile to any messianic claim, and felt free

to regard any such language as a usurpation of privileges which properly belonged to God alone. Part of the difficulty of explaining a point of this kind lies in the fact that, while we have abundant testimony to the views and opinions of the scribes and Pharisees, we have little or no literary remains of the Sadducees who were contemporary with Jesus.

Whatever the exact grounds were, all agreed that Jesus was doomed to death, the phrase not implying that they could actually pass and execute sentence of death, but that they agreed that this penalty ought to be inflicted if opportunity could be found. Then followed the insults of the servants; Mark says that they blindfolded Jesus before cuffing him and crying, 'Prophesy to us, you Christ! tell us who struck you!' This certainly renders the action more intelligible. A person who had been a week in Jerusalem might have picked up the names of one or two of them by natural methods, but only a prophet could identify an assailant when blinded.

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A maid- 69
servant came up and said to him, 'You were with Jesus
the Galilean too.' But he denied it before them all; 'I 70
do not know what you mean,' he said. When he went 71
out to the gateway another maidservant noticed him and
said to those who were there, 'This fellow was with Jesus
the Nazarene.' Again he denied it; he swore, 'I do 72
not know the man.' After a little the bystanders came up 73
and said to Peter, 'To be sure, you are one of them too.
Why, your accent betrays you!' At this he broke out 74
cursing and swearing, 'I do not know the man.' At that
moment a cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what 75
Jesus had said, that 'before the cock crows you will disown
me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Here again there are interesting variations from Mark, though the latter is the source. There Peter is teased by a malicious slave-girl, who follows him out of the court and points him out to the bystanders as one who had been with Jesus. Here there are two slave-girls, and both address him directly. The third denial in both cases is in answer to a

remark made by the bystanders. In Mark they simply recognize him as a Galilean ; here the reason is given—his accent betrays him. Northern Israel always seems to have pronounced certain sounds rather differently from the south, being slovenly in distinguishing its dentals and gutturals, while there were probably also vowel modifications. Though this was probably no more than rough chaff—there must have been tens of thousands of Galileans in Jerusalem for the Passover—Peter was frightened, and fell. **A cock crowed. Then Peter remembered**—it was enough ; he had fallen just as Jesus had said he would, and if he had learnt nothing else, he had learnt his own weakness.

xxvii.

1 **When morning came, all the high priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus, so as to have him put**
2 **to death. After binding him, they led him off and handed him over to Pontius Pilate the governor.**

The high priests and the elders had judged Jesus to be worthy of death. It did not matter to them what means they adopted for getting their sentence carried out, but it could not be done by themselves without involving them in a charge of murder. So they **took counsel** together, and came to the conclusion that they must trump up some charge against him before Pilate. Accordingly, at the earliest opportunity, they took him into the official Roman court.

3 **Then Judas his betrayer saw he was condemned, and repented ; he brought back the thirty silver pieces to the high priests**
4 **and elders, saying, 'I did wrong in betraying innocent blood.' 'What does that matter to us ?' they said, 'it**
5 **is your affair, not ours !' Then he flung down the silver**
6 **pieces in the temple and went off and hung himself. The high priests took the money and said, 'It would be wrong to put this into the treasury, for it is the price of blood.'**
7 **So after consulting they bought with it the Potter's Field,**
8 **to serve as a burying-place for strangers. That is why**
9 **the field is called to this day 'The Field of Blood.' Then the word spoken by the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled :**

and I took the thirty silver pieces, the price of him who had been priced, whom they had priced and expelled from the sons of Israel; and I gave them for the potter's field, as 10
the Lord had bidden me.

No other gospel has any mention of Judas after the betrayal, but there is an account of his death in Acts i. 18 f. There is little in common between the two narratives except the fact that the field where he died is called **The Field** (Ground) **of Blood.** It is clear that there was a plot of this name, and that early Christian tradition connected it with the death of Judas. In details—gruesome as they obviously are—the narrative in Acts is by no means clear, and though suicide is not necessarily excluded, it is an unlikely interpretation of the story. On the other hand, we may suspect that this evangelist has shaped his narrative on a quotation from '**Jeremiah,**' though the nearest reference in the book bearing Jeremiah's name is the purchase of the ancestral field from Hanameel, xxxii. 6–9. The language recalls Zechariah xi. 13, though, if it be meant for a quotation from that passage, it is very loose, and conforms neither to the M.T. nor to the LXX. Probably it is taken from a book of 'Testimonies,' whose compiler was not always accurate in reproducing his selections.

Whatever be its history, the narrative remains impressive and terrible. We have first the remorse of Judas, who had known all along that he was **betraying innocent blood,** but had not realized the horror of the crime. Against this is shewn the chilly indifference of the **high priests** to a moral question and to the suffering of a penitent spirit. Their interest lies in seeing that the temple is not defiled, as it would have been, had **the price of blood** been brought into it. There seems to be no direct prohibition in the Law, but it is a natural deduction from such a passage as Deuteronomy xxiii. 19. So they find a use for the money in buying **the potter's field, to serve as a burying-place for strangers,** i.e. either criminals or pilgrims from a distance who happened to die in Jerusalem.

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked 11
him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' Jesus replied,

12 'Certainly.' But while he was being accused by the high
13 priests and elders, he made no reply. Then Pilate said to
him, 'Do you not hear all their evidence against you?'
14 But, to Pilate's great astonishment, he would not answer
him a single word.
15 At festival time the governor was in the habit of releasing any
16 one prisoner whom the crowd chose. At that time they
17 had a notorious prisoner called Jesus Bar-Abbas; so, when
they had gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Who do you want
released? Jesus Bar-Abbas or Jesus the so-called
18 "Christ"?' (He knew quite well that Jesus had been
19 delivered up out of envy. Besides, when he was seated on
the tribunal, his wife had sent to tell him, 'Do nothing
with that innocent man, for I have suffered greatly to-day
20 in a dream about him.') But the high priests and elders
persuaded the crowds to ask Bar-Abbas and to have Jesus
21 killed. The governor said to them, 'Which of the two do
you want me to release for you?' 'Bar-Abbas,' they
22 said. Pilate said, 'Then what am I to do with Jesus the
so-called "Christ"?' They all said, 'Have him cruci-
23 fied!' 'Why,' said the governor, 'what has he done
wrong?' But they shouted on more fiercely than ever,
24 'Have him crucified!' Now when Pilate saw that in-
stead of him doing any good a riot was rising, he took some
water and washed his hands in presence of the crowd,
saying, 'I am innocent of this good man's blood. It is
25 your affair!' To this all the people replied, 'His blood
26 be on us and on our children!' Then he released Bar-
Abbas for them; Jesus he scourged and handed over to
be crucified.

The evangelist has used greater freedom than he normally does in taking this passage from Mark. Not only are many of the sentences remodelled, but two incidents are inserted, neither of which is paralleled elsewhere. One of these is the dream of Pilate's wife (ver. 19), and the other is in vers. 24 f., where Pilate washes his hands, and the people accept for themselves the guilt of the death of Jesus. The former of

these incidents is much expanded in some of the apocryphal gospels, and it is probably intended to heighten the effect of the reluctance of Pilate to condemn a prisoner whom he knew to be innocent. **Besides** is, perhaps, too strong an expression for the Greek connecting particle used here, and the verse gives the impression of being an afterthought.

The second insertion exhibits the point of view of the Jewish Christians. It was only natural that they, even more than Gentile converts, should feel the guilt of the crucifixion of Jesus, and believe that only those who turned to Christ could escape from responsibility for it. Writing, as he did, after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the evangelist clearly held that the sufferings of the Jews were a direct punishment for their rejection of their true Messiah, and, accordingly, he introduces an incident which makes them, all ignorant of the real meaning of their words, take upon them the responsibility of the death of Jesus. The **washing of the hands** as a symbol of innocence is a familiar rite ; it is prescribed in Deuteronomy xxi. 6 f. as the means of purification for a city near whose borders a corpse has been found.

To Pilate's question, '**Are you the king of the Jews?**' Jesus answers, '**Certainly.**' As in Mark, so here, he speaks no other word in the presence of the governor. Once more we are impressed by the fact that Jesus had stedfastly set his feet on the road that led to the Cross, and he used the minimum of speech and action that would bring him to his goal. The words were technically an admission of treason against the Roman state, and Pilate could now, if he wished, condemn Jesus with every appearance of justice. Yet he was clearly not satisfied, and seems to have made up his mind that this prisoner was harmless. Certainly he could not understand the hostility of the mob, and may have made his offer to release Jesus in all good faith. Once more we observe that the whole trend of the narrative is to relieve the Roman official of the real guilt, and to throw it upon the Jews, particularly upon the priests.

The dramatic force of the alternatives presented to the people is heightened by the reading correctly adopted in the text as

given by Dr. Moffatt : **'Who do you want released? Jesus[1] Bar-Abbas or Jesus the so-called "Christ"?'** This is, in a sense, the culmination of the teaching of Jesus during the last part of his ministry. He claimed to be the Messiah, but he was not such a Messiah as his people expected. To them the ideal deliverer was one who could lead armies in the field, employ material weapons, and expel the political oppressor. Such a man as Jesus Bar-Abbas appealed to them strongly, for, as Mark tells us, he had been concerned in a political riot which had led to bloodshed. He had drawn the sword against the hated Roman, and was, therefore, exactly the kind of person the Zealots and their followers would have to lead them. On the other side stood **Jesus the so-called 'Christ,'** who would have nothing to do with violence, and had even allowed himself to be arrested without permitting a blow to be struck in his own defence. A leader, however great his attractiveness, who could yield so feebly to the enemy, making no attempt to enforce his claims, was utterly useless for the national purpose as commonly understood, and, faced with the choice, the Jews without hesitation, rather with enthusiasm, chose the violent materialist in preference to the patient idealist. They took the sword, and in the end they perished by the sword.

27 **Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the praetorium**
28 **and got all the regiment round him; they stripped him**
29 **and threw a scarlet mantle round him, plaited a crown of thorns and set it on his head, put a stick in his right hand, and knelt before him in mockery, crying, 'Hail, king of**
30 **the Jews!' They spat on him, they took the stick and**
31 **struck him on the head, and after making fun of him they stripped him of the mantle, put on his own clothes, and took him off to be crucified.**

A few additions have been made to the text of Mark, e.g. that the soldiers **knelt before him in mockery.** The 'purple'

[1] The name 'Jesus' here is possibly original, though omitted by most ancient authorities. Its inclusion helps to enforce the contrast between the two figures.

of the original is (probably rightly) changed to **a scarlet mantle**, the ordinary soldier's cloak, which was near enough to the imperial colour for purposes of mockery. The **crown of thorns** was not necessarily made of a plant with stiff, sharp spines, and its purpose was not to inflict further physical pain, but to enhance the mockery. These soldiers were used to rebels who fought, and may have had to deal with more than one militant nationalist ; to them it was a huge joke that a person claiming to be **king of the Jews** should play the traitor with such ineptitude. What should men like these see in Jesus ?

IV. xxvii. 32–66. The Cross and the Tomb

As they went out they met a Cyrenian called Simon, whom they 32
forced to carry his cross. When they came to a place 33
called Golgotha (meaning the place of a skull), *they gave* 34
him *a drink of wine* mixed *with bitters ;* but when he tasted
it he would not drink it. Then they crucified him, 35
distributed his clothes among them by drawing lots, and sat 36
down there to keep watch over him. They also put over 37
his head his charge in writing,

THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Two robbers were also crucified with him at that time, 38
one on the right hand and one on the left. Those who 39
passed by scoffed at him, nodding at him in derision and
calling, 'You were to destroy the temple and build it in 40
three days ! Save yourself, if you are God's Son !
Come down from the cross !' So, too, the high priests 41
made fun of him with the scribes and the elders of the
people. 'He saved others,' they said, 'but he cannot 42
save himself ! He the "King of Israel" ! Let him
come down now from the cross ; then we will believe in
him ! *His trust is in God ? Let God deliver him now* 43
if he cares for him ! He said he was the Son of God !'
The robbers who were crucified with him also denounced 44
him in the same way.

Now from twelve o'clock to three o'clock darkness covered all 45
the land, and about three o'clock Jesus gave a loud cry, 46

'*Eli, eli, lema sabachthani*' (that is, My God, my God,
47 why hast thou forsaken me?) On hearing this some of
48 the bystanders said, 'He is calling for Elijah.' One
of them ran off at once and took a sponge which he soaked
in vinegar and put on the end of a stick to give him a
49 drink. But the others said, 'Stop, let us see if Elijah
does come to save him!' [Seizing a lance, another
50 pricked his side, and out came water and blood.] Jesus
51 again uttered a loud scream and gave up his spirit. And
the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to
52 bottom, the earth shook, the rocks were split, the tombs
were opened, and a number of bodies of the saints who
53 slept the sleep of death rose up—they left the tombs after
his resurrection and entered the holy city and appeared
54 to a number of people. Now when the army-captain
and his men who were watching Jesus saw the earth-
quake and all that happened, they were dreadfully afraid;
they said, 'This man was certainly a son of God!'
55 There were also a number of women there looking on
from a distance, women who had followed Jesus from
56 Galilee and waited on him, including Mary of Magdala,
Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother
of the sons of Zebedaeus.

Amongst the portents mentioned in vers. 51–54 the only one recorded in Mark is that the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; for the rest this evangelist follows his source fairly closely. There is in ver. 43 an additional citation from Psalm xxii. (ver. 8) in which the translation differs from the LXX, though both seem to be based on the same Hebrew text. It is clear that this Psalm was much in the mind of the early Christians when they thought of the death of their Lord, for its language is used also in ver. 35 —the soldiers distributed his clothes among them by drawing lots. This is probably due to the reference to the Psalm in ver. 46. It is not likely that the bracketed words in ver. 49 are original.

There is no event in human history which is better known

or more significant than this. The details of the execution, the charge over the cross, the mockery of the passers-by and of the other victims, the last cry, the exclamation of the officer in charge—all these need neither explanation nor elaboration. It is clear that the centre of the whole narrative is the outcry of Jesus himself. **'Eli, eli, lema sabachthani.'** The words are taken from the first verse of Psalm xxii. Yet they are far more than a mere citation ; for they are not Hebrew, the language in which the Psalm had been written, and in which it was regularly read and sung. They are in Aramaic, the natural speech which Jesus had used all his life, and are an expression of his own experience.

It is that experience which gives to the death of Jesus its unique horror. Very many men have known something of the immediate contact with God which properly belongs to the mystic. There have been moments, even hours, when it seems as if the veil of the material were rent aside, and God were seen in full truth. The unreality of the physical and the reality of the spiritual become facts of experience. The world of the sensuous falls into its true perspective, and men know that the things which are seen are temporal, while the things that are not seen are eternal. God becomes the nearest and the most certain element in experience, and the body, with all that world to which it pertains, takes its rightful place. Happy is he whose faith assures him that such moments are moments of insight and not of illusion, for about him the shadows will deepen and condense and solidify, till he is tempted to believe that it is the mountain's foot (with its unbelief and its daemoniacs) that is valid, rather than the peak of transfiguration.

Even to those who enjoy such experiences to the utmost, their advent is comparatively rare and their duration short. But —and this seems to distinguish Jesus from all others—to him such a state was normal and permanent. He was always God-conscious, and his sense of the reality, nearness, and love of his Father had been unbroken. Hence his certainty, his sureness, when speaking of his Father. He knew Him, as a man may know his closest human friend ; he had no doubts.

no vagueness about His will, for he lived in unintermittent communion with Him. Jesus valued and loved his earthly friends ; to some extent he leaned upon them, fallible though he knew them to be. But the intimate friendship of his soul was with the Unseen, and in this he found his true life. And now, when he had been bereft of everything else, when his friends had forsaken, denied, betrayed him, when the nation that he loved so passionately had hounded him to a death of shame—in a word, at the very point when his need of God was greatest, God vanished from the field of experience, and he was left alone, in a solitude of spirit inconceivable to us who have never known the intensity of the friendship of God. Nowhere else in the gospels does Jesus address God as God ; elsewhere, even in the supreme agony in the garden, it is his Father to whom he appeals, with all the boundless wealth of affection that lies in the infant name 'Abba.' In that moment Jesus knew the experience that sin brings to us all, and he alone could know how unspeakably terrible it was. 'He made him to be sin who himself knew nothing of sin.'

57 Now when evening came, a rich man from Arimathaea,
58 called Joseph, who had become a disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate and asked him for the body of Jesus. Pilate then
59 ordered the body to be handed over to him. So Joseph
60 took the body, wrapped it in clean linen, and put it in his new tomb, which he had cut in the rock ; then, after rolling a large boulder to the opening of the tomb, he went away.
61 Mary of Magdala and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

Again Mark is closely followed. Among minor differences may be noted the fact that Mark calls Joseph a counsellor of good position, instead of a rich man. He also remarks that Pilate was surprised to find that Jesus had lived so short a time on the cross. The narrative makes it clear that this is not intended to be the final interment. But the Sabbath is at hand, and a temporary disposition of the body must be made ; Joseph's own new tomb was evidently close by the place of

execution, and it was convenient to use that, at least for the time. Probably Joseph would have been satisfied to leave the body of Jesus there permanently, but even so the loving care of those who had known Jesus in life would lead to a proper embalming of the corpse. In ver. 61 Mark's form—**Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joses noted where he was laid**—is to be preferred to Matthew's **Mary of Magdala and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.** The sequel shews that they were concerned to remember the spot in order that they might return when the Sabbath was over. It was all they could do, and it shewed that their love was of the kind that outlives death.

Next day (that is, on the day after the Preparation) the high 62
priests and Pharisees gathered round Pilate and said,
'We remember, sir, that when this impostor was alive 63
he said, "I will rise after three days." Now then, give 64
orders for the tomb to be kept secure till the third day,
in case his disciples go and steal him and then tell the
people, "He has risen from the dead." The end of the
fraud will then be worse than the beginning of it.' Pilate 65
said to them, 'Take a guard of soldiers, go and make
it as secure as you can.' So off they went and made the 66
tomb secure by putting a seal on the boulder and setting the
guard.

This and the companion section, xxviii. 11–15, are found only in Matthew, and are doubtless a part of the special heritage of the Jewish church. It is curious that the charge of having stolen away the body of Jesus seems to have been levelled at the disciples only by Jews. It does not seem to occur in any rabbinic writing, but is mentioned by Justin in his anti-Jewish volume, the *Dialogue with Trypho*. The evangelist attempts to meet this accusation by recording the defence current among Jewish Christians. The historicity of the story has been doubted, and it must be admitted that the two sections (especially the second) fit in very badly with their context. But it is very difficult to construct a consistent narrative of the Resurrection from the items supplied

in the New Testament, and this detail may have been well founded. One of the objections lies in the fact that the enemies of Jesus remembered **that when this impostor was alive he said, 'I will rise after three days.'** The disciples themselves certainly seem to have forgotten these words till after they had had evidence of his being alive, for his reappearance was the last thing that they expected. Further, the combination of the priests (Sadducees) and the Pharisees to act in violation of the Sabbath is very unusual. Nevertheless, the sections remain an interesting witness to the relations between the early Jewish church and their unconverted brethren.

V. CHAP. xxviii. : RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

xxviii.

1 **At the close of the sabbath, as the first day of the week was**
dawning, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to
2 **look at the tomb. But a great earthquake took place;**
an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and went
3 **and rolled away the boulder and sat on it. His appear-**
ance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow.
4 **For fear of him the sentries shook and became like dead**
5 **men; but the angel addressed the women, saying, 'Have**
no fear; I know you are looking for the crucified Jesus.
6 **He is not here, he has risen, as he told you he would.**
7 **See, here is the place where he [the Lord] lay. Now be**
quick and go to his disciples, tell them he has risen from
the dead and that "he precedes you to Galilee; you shall
8 **see him there." That is my message for you.' Then**
they ran quickly from the tomb in fear and great joy, to
9 **announce the news to his disciples. And Jesus himself**
met them, saying, 'Hail!' So they went up to him
10 **and caught hold of his feet and worshipped him; then**
Jesus said to them, 'Have no fear! Go and tell my
brothers to leave for Galilee; they shall see me there.'

The gospel of Mark, as is well known, ends so abruptly as to make it almost certain that at an early point in its history the last page or so was lost. But there is reason to believe that this evangelist was using a complete copy, for Mark

breaks off with the words **for they were afraid**, represented in ver. 8 of the text above by **in fear**. In Mark the women on their way to the tomb are represented as discussing the means whereby they may roll away the stone from its mouth, and are surprised to see that it is already gone. It is only when they actually enter the grave that they see ' a youth sitting on the right dressed in a white robe.' Here the youth is recognized as **an angel of the Lord**, and it was, apparently, he **who rolled away the boulder**, causing **a great earthquake.** There is also a reference to the sentries lent by Pilate to the priests and the Pharisees to guard the tomb.

The actual details of the Resurrection have been much disputed, and possibly no final solution will ever be reached. In particular it is not easy to harmonize the Marcan tradition, which gives the women the message for the disciples, **' he precedes you to Galilee ; you shall see him there,'** followed (presumably) by an account of the meeting represented by the last verses of this gospel, with the narrative of the Acts (to say nothing of the Fourth Gospel) which places the appearances in Jerusalem. Curiously enough, Paul, in enumerating these appearances (1 Corinthians xv. 5–8), does not say that Jesus himself met the women. Further, a comparison of Matthew with Mark shews how quickly a narrative might be expanded, receiving miraculous accretions. Nevertheless, the story must have started somehow ; there must have been a primitive form to which the accretions could have been added.

The Resurrection came upon the disciples wholly unexpectedly, and it made a profound difference to them. The basic fact seems to have been the empty tomb, and in addition to this they had some evidence which convinced them that Jesus was not dead, but was still alive, though he had passed through the gates of death. Nothing else will account for the change in them. The apostles of the primitive church were far from being perfect, but they were immeasurably greater men than they had been while Jesus was on earth. The death of their master will certainly not account for the passionate enthusiasm which made the church of the first generation.

They, at any rate, were certain of the risen Christ, and no persuasion and no threat could shake their belief. So strong was it that they were themselves prepared to stake everything here and hereafter upon it, and it gave to them a vigour which carried their gospel through the whole of the known world. We think of Paul as the first to catch a vision of an imperial church, but though he was the greatest thinker and perhaps the most powerful personality, he was clearly only one among many evangelists. There was a church in Rome years before he reached the city. There are those who are inclined to distrust the details of this passage, and doubt whether the women really did go up to Jesus, whether they **caught hold of his feet** and received his message, but the church itself is a fact which cannot easily be explained away. We may not understand exactly how the disciples came to know that the Lord was risen indeed, but they did know, and their knowledge changed the world.

11 **While they were on their way, some of the sentries went into**
the city and reported all that had taken place to the high
12 **priests, who, after meeting and conferring with the elders,**
13 **gave a considerable sum of money to the soldiers and told**
them to say that 'his disciples came at night and stole
14 **him when we were asleep.' 'If this comes to the ears of**
the governor,' they added, 'we will satisfy him and see
that you have no trouble about the matter.' So the
15 **soldiers took the money and followed their instructions;**
and this story has been disseminated among the Jews down
to the present day.

This is the companion passage to xxvii. 62–66. It certainly presents the guard in an unfortunate light. If they said, **'his disciples came at night and stole him when we were asleep,'** they would surely have to face two questions: 'How did you come to sleep, all of you, on watch?' and 'If you were asleep, how did you know that his disciples stole his body?' Perhaps the form in which the Jewish legend was current laid itself open to these objections, and the evangelist is deliberately calling attention to them.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the hill where Jesus 16
had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they 17
worshipped him, though some were in doubt. Then 18
Jesus came forward to them and said, 'Full authority has
been given to me in heaven and on earth; go and make 19
disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the
Father and the Son and the holy Spirit, and teach them to 20
obey all the commands I have laid on you. And I will be
with you all the time, to the very end of the world.'

The scene recalls that described in John xxi. It seems that Jesus is first seen at a distance, and some of them recognize him while others are in doubt. As he draws nearer, all are convinced of the truth and are ready to receive his last words. During his earthly life he has necessarily been subject to physical limitations, now he is free from them. All that death has done to him is to strip him of those bonds of time and space which tie down all men on earth. Now, at last, he can say, **'Full authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.'** In virtue of this authority he bids them carry his message throughout the whole world, and **baptize** all nations **into the name of the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit.** Very possibly the trinitarian formula is a reflection back into the narrative of the practice of the early church, but there is no need to doubt the essence of the command. To baptize into a name was to baptize into the possession of the person who owned the name. Those who were thus immersed henceforward belonged to God; they were His property. Finally, Jesus gives them the assurance that they most need for the accomplishment of their work. Communion with him is not to be delayed till death is passed; it is something that may be known here and now. And through the ages, in spite of difficulties and weaknesses, the united voice of the church has testified to the fulfilment of the greatest of the promises ascribed to Jesus: **'And I will be with you all the time, to the very end of the world.'**

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